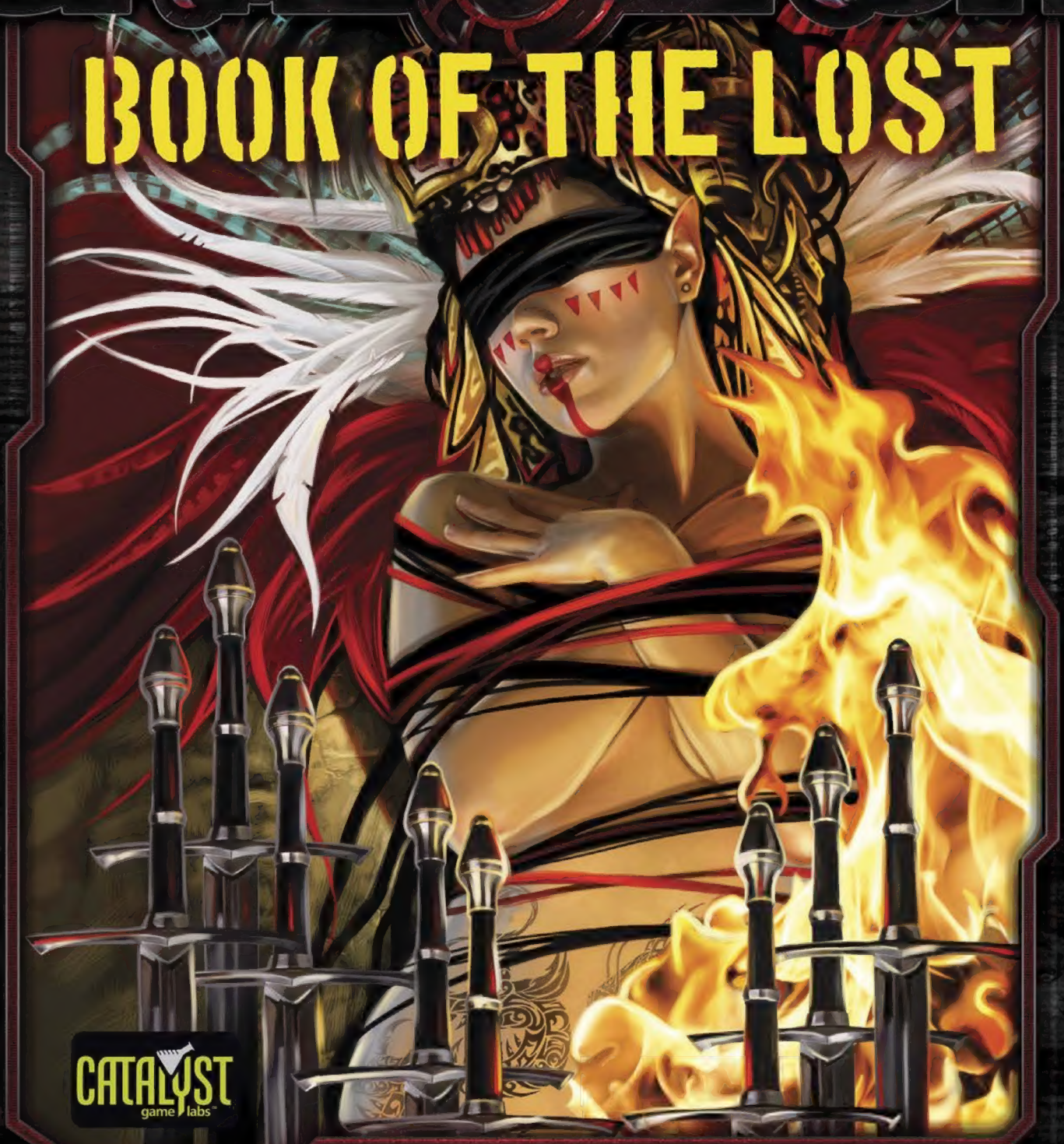
SHADOWRUN

BOOK OF THE LOST



CATALYST game labs

A SHADOWRUN CAMPAIGN BOOK

BOOK OF THE LOST

CATALYST game labs™

INTRODUCTION 5

THE DAMAGE DONE, AND THEN THE DEALER 7

DECK BUILDING 10

WHAT WE KNOW 11

Why Should We Care? 12

THE MEAN STREETS 12

Triad Connections 12

Black Market Battles and Smuggler's Blues 13

Happy Halloweener 13

VOICES IN THE ELECTRONIC ETHER 14

Dealer Net 14

Neon Ascension 15

ORACLE SOCIETY 16

CORPORATE INTERESTS 17

Aztechnology 17

Mitsuhama Computer Technologies (MCT) 17

Saeder-Krupp 17

Wuxing 17

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT 18

Task Force 154 18

THE REST 19

Draco Foundation 19

Romanov Clan 19

The Hands of Fate 20

SHIFTING PYRE 20

ALIGNING THE COURT 24

USING THEMES AND MOTIFS 32

CLUES 32

ADVICE 32

WANDERING FOOL 33

ITEMS AND OBJECTS 36

Recorded 18-08-2078 36

Recorded 20-08-2078 44

Recorded 26-08-2078 44

Recorded 01-09-2078 45

Recorded 14-10-2078 45

Recorded 31-10-2078 46

Recorded 01-11-2078 46

Recorded 13-11-2078 47

Recorded 03-12-2078 47

PEOPLE 50

Kaze Adeki 51

Leader TRU-13 51

Kyle Blacklighter 51

Neon Ascension host 51

Joygirl-IX 52

Independent Agent 52

Emily Llanfrechfa 53

Mystic Seer 53

Armando Salazar 55

Aztechnology Director of Special Projects 55

Fargus Sol PhD/T 55

Professor of Advanced Magical Theory 55

Task Force 154 56

FBI Special Unit 56

LADY XOC 57

First Among Sisters, (802) High Priestess Faction 57

LORD GWYN 58

Eolaí of the Unseelie Court 58

MARA ARIEL 60

Freelance Operative 60

THE ARCANE THREE 60

Black Star, Association of Awakened Anarchists 60

LA PANTERA 62

Vengeance in Tenochtitlán 62

JOSEPH MNGUNI 63

(1247) Izolo Inc. 63

TACO TEMPLE 66

It's Nothing More Than a Restaurant 67

It is a Vehicle for Card Collectors 67

It is a Phenomenon with a Mystical but Obscure Connection to the Sixth World Tarot 67

WHAT IT MEANS 69

Aid to Those in Need 69

Reading the Cards 70

The Story of the Avenging Angel 70

Five of Coins 71

Six of Cups 71

Six of Coins 71

Seven of Cups 71

Seven of Blades 72

Knight of Blades 72

Knight of Coins 72

Powers Behind the Chalupa 73

Six of Cups 73

Seven of Cups 73

Seven of Blades 73

Knight of Blades 74

Five of Coins 74

Six of Coins 75

The Deep Dark 75

CODES AND PUZZLES 78

CARD AND PUZZLE BACKGROUND 78

Knowledge Test Results 78

0 Hits: No Knowledge 78

1 Hit: Vague Knowledge 78

2 Hits: Rumor Knowledge 78

3 Hits: Public Knowledge 78

4 Hits: Detailed Knowledge 78

5+ Hits: Specialist Knowledge 79

Cards and Projectors 79

The Awakening and the Conspiracy 80

HOW DIFFERENT POWERS PERCEIVE THE TAROT 80

Dragons 80

Spirits 81

Megacorps 81

PUZZLES 81

Basic Puzzles 81

Hidden Object Puzzles 82

Wave Puzzles 82

Monolith Puzzles 82

Advanced Puzzles 82

Script Puzzles 82

Flag Puzzles 82

Keys 82

The Grid Map 82

The Radial Map 82

Two Keys 83

Frequency Puzzle 83

Seismogram Puzzle 83

USING CARDS AS ADVENTURE HOOKS 83

Operations 83

Campaigns 84

SAMPLE OPERATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS 85

ONE AT A TIME 85

Puzzle Difficulty: Easy 85

Campaign 85

Setup 85

Mr. Johnson 85

Introduction 85

Blades Run 86

Batons Run 86

Cups Run 86

Aftermath 86

Possible endings 86

THE GATES OF WAR 86

Puzzle Difficulty: Easy 86

Setup 87

Introduction 87

The Run 87

Possible Endings 88

OPERATION VERUM VIRIDI 88

Puzzle Difficulty: Easy 88

Solution 88

Campaign 88

NOT THAT PENTAGON 88

Puzzle Difficulty: Easy 88

Solution 88

Campaign 88

EXES AND HEXES 89

Puzzle Difficulty: Hard 89

Solution 89

Campaign 89

SEVEN ATE NINE 89

Puzzle Difficulty: Medium 89

Solution 89

Campaign 89

CLOUD NINE 90

Puzzle Difficulty: Medium 90

Solution 90

Campaign 90

AMERICA'S TOP TEN 91

Puzzle Difficulty: Easy 91

Solution 91

Campaign 91

HELLO, NURSE! 91

Puzzle Difficulty: Hard 91

Solution 91

Campaign 92

THE LAND OF PLENTY 92

Puzzle Difficulty: ROTFL 92

Solution 92

Campaign 92

RED HOURGLASS 93

Puzzle Difficulty: Hard 93

Solution 93

Campaign 93

ROYAL PAIN 93

Puzzle Difficulty: ROTFL 93

Solution 93

Campaign 93

CARDS AS AUGURY 96

THE DECK AS TAROT 97

The Bastard 97
The Matrix 97
Aes Sídhe Banrigh 97
The Chief Executive 97
The Higher Power 97
The Avatars 97
The Ride 97
Discipline 98
The Wheel of Fortune 98
The Vigilante 98
… 404 … 98
Threshold 99
The Dragon 99
The Comet 99
The Shadows 99
The Eclipse 99
Karma 99
The Awakened World 99
Batons 99
Summary 99

THE DECK AS PROPHETIC IMAGES 99

Straightforward Imagery 100
The Bastard 100
The Hermit 100
The Tower 100
Karma 101
The Case with Five Stars 101
The Five of Cups 102
The Man with Purple Hair 102
The Multi-Armed Man 102
The Triplets 102
Symbolic Imagery 103
White Roses 103
Marks on Palms 103
Guns vs. Blades 103

THE DECK'S ROLE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE 104

Providing Warnings 104
Providing Inspiration 104
Feeding the Copycats 105

POWER OF THE CARDS 108

SETS OF FOUR 108

Twos 108
Threes 108
Fours 108
Fives 109
Sixes 109
Sevens 109
Eights 109
Nines 110
Tens 111
Pages 111
Knights 111
Queens 112
King 112
Aces 112

MAJOR ARCANA 113

The Bastard 113
The Matrix 113
The High Priestess 113
Aes Sídhe Banrigh 114
The Chief Executive 114
The Higher Power 114
The Avatars 114
The Ride 114
Discipline 114
The Hermit 114
Wheel of Fortune 115
The Vigilante 115
The Hanged Man 115
… 404 … 115
Threshold 115
The Dragon 115
The Tower 115
The Comet 116
The Shadows 116
The Eclipse 116
Karma 116
The Awakened World 116

MIX AND MATCH 116

Crystal Bloodblade 116
Large Collections 117

CHARACTER TROVE 120

Anne Lynne 120

THE ARCANE THREE 120

Black Star, Association of Awakened Anarchists 120
Kangee Cikala 120
Caróg Bheag 121
Kogarasu Maru 122
Armando Salazar 122
Benjamin E. Edwards 123
Cabal Hunters 123
Devil 123
Emily Llanfrechfa 123
Fargus Sol, PhD/T 124
Headhunter Member 124
Headhunter Member 125
Joseph Mnguni 125
Joygirl-IX 126
Kaze Adeki 127
KokuO Zhiguli 128
Kyle Blacklighter 128
Lady Xoc 128
La Pantera 130
Lilith 130
Lord Gwyn 131
Mara Ariel 131
Orenji and Turgan 132
Orenji 132
Turgan (Ork) 132

TASK FORCE 154 132

Rick Sorenson 132
Amber Whitehouse 133
Ian Decker 134

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JACKPOINT

CONNECTING TO JACKPOINT VPN...
...IDENTITY SPOOFED
...ENCRYPTION KEYS GENERATED
...CONNECTED TO ONION ROUTERS

>>>LOGIN: XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
>>>ENTER PASSCODE: XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
...BIOMETRIC SCAN CONFIRMED
YOU'RE IN. USE IT WELL.

"FEAR IS DANGEROUS, NOT THE TAROT." -BENEBELL WEN

JACKPOINT STATS
64 Users are active on the network

LATEST NEWS
- Taco Temple will deliver no more chalupas until at least half your outstanding balance is paid.

PERSONAL ALERTS
- You have 22 new private messages.
- You have 14 new responses to your JackPoint posts.
- PDA: Your poker game is tonight. The other players have requested you bring normal playing cards this time.

THE INNER CIRCLE
There are four Members online and in your area.

Your Current Rep Score:
772 (69% Positive)

Current Time: 17 Feb 2079, 1118 hrs

WELCOME BACK TO JACKPOINT, CHUMMER:
Your last connection was severed 2 hours, 17 minutes, 35 seconds ago

TODAY'S HEADS UP
- When was the last time you had something tremendously valuable and powerful that could fit in your back pocket? —Glitch

INCOMING
- Remember: You don't ask the mark for money. You wait for them to offer. [Tag: Cutting Aces]
- Good magicians know what magic is too dangerous to attempt. Great magicians say screw that. [Tag: Forbidden Arcana]
- Fight for your life long enough, and you end up in Seattle. Weird. [Tag: Seattle Gambit]

TOP NEWS ITEMS
- Taco Temple named "Fastest-Growing Franchise" for second year running. Link
- Richard Villiers denies being summoned to private meeting with five Corporate Court judges. Link
- Evo introduces new scanners for use at all sub-orbital, orbital, and outer space travel stations designed to detect any hint of CFD. Other corps rush to purchase and install them. Link

INTRODUCTION

Here's the critical thing to remember: Tarot decks—any tarot decks, not just the Sixth World Tarot that has emerged (or re-emerged, or been discovered, or whatever) into the world—are a lot like your favorite gun in their primary function. It's the same function that almost any power has, namely, to gain control over something that would otherwise be uncontrollable. Point a gun at someone, even if that person is a big, angry troll, and watch them get calm. You feel like you have control over them, and an element of chaos has been tamed. When it comes to the tarot, the big, angry troll you're trying to subdue is the future, that unruly beast that ambushes everyone, one way or another. The divination people attempt to pull from the tarot sheds a light into this unknown darkness, telling you what's waiting for you out there. It may be scary and intimidating, but knowing what it is, is the first step to doing something about it.

But there are risks. Of course there are risks! Let's go back to the situation with the gun and the troll. Yeah, it feels great when you're first pointing the weapon and watching some of the fire go out of the troll's eyes. But that's just one moment. What if the troll gets the drop on you and yanks your gun away? What if you and the troll separate, and your enemy vows to get revenge so that you have to spend the rest of your life looking over your shoulder? Or what if you go ahead and take the shot, bringing the troll down? Are your troubles over, or are some allies or compatriots going to track you down? That moment of control you thought you had just led to new complications, new risks, and new possibilities of disaster.

That, too, is the Sixth World Tarot. It honors the poet by telling the truth but telling it slant, providing enough information to give a false sense of confidence that vanishes just as soon as the full truth appears. A situation you thought you had controlled turns out to be one that was manipulating you to some terrible end.

So maybe the deck is something to be avoided. But it's power, and the Sixth World is terrible at ignoring power. The power it contains goes beyond predicting the future. It extends to magic trapped inside the cards, powers that can be unleashed when certain groups of them are gathered together or specific actions are performed. There are also secrets buried in the cards—codes, puzzles, and obscure references that, when properly understood, can lead to riches, powerful artifacts, or secrets some people would like to see stay hidden.

There's a lot to take in, so here are the sections that will provide a way to cut through the tangled webs these cards weave. First, **Deck Building** provides an overview of the Tarot and how the powers of the Sixth World are maneuvering around it. **Aligning the Court** provides a look at the Seelie Court side of the Tarot. Since the Court's factions are closely aligned with the major arcana of the Tarot, the collection and use of the cards is of great interest to fae courtiers. **Using Themes and Motifs** starts to dig into the cards themselves, looking at some elements that occur on multiple cards and providing guidance about deciphering their meaning. **Items and Objects** goes even deeper along those lines, reviewing specific elements that recur on cards and how they might play out in the so-called real world.

Briefly moving outside of the cards, **People** covers some of the parties embroiled in looking for the cards—the types of people runners might encounter while seeking the cards, or those who might hire them. **Taco Temple** goes in depth on one recurring theme of the deck, the Taco Temple logo, and discusses theories about what this upstart chain means to the Sixth World and why it makes so many appearances in the deck.

Codes and Puzzles is your guide to some of the in-depth puzzles that the deck contains. While it doesn't give away all the secrets (what fun would that be?), it has lots of advice and ideas about the runs the Tarot deck can inspire.

Cards as Augury looks into the divination aspect of the Sixth World Tarot and the ways it can be used to catch a glimpse into the future—or muddy the waters as time flows forward. **Power of the Cards** looks at specific boons and powers the cards may grant intrepid beneficiaries. Finally, the **Character Trove** offers stats on numerous people named throughout the book.

The Sixth World Tarot is the launching point of a million possible shadowurns. This book is your guide to the plots, schemes, jobs, and adventures hidden in the deck, waiting to be uncovered by runners with enough guts, daring—and yes, power—to control the unknown.

THE DAMAGE DONE, AND THEN THE DEALER

BY RAYMOND CROTEAU

Sarah "Slag" Millersson stumbled out of the Ledo Hotel's lounge door and onto Elgin Street, her drunken gaze wandering toward the drone crew still ripping up the old railyard, trying to reclaim the long-tainted soil. The still-increasing land values made finally made this work profitable, so Saeder-Krupp had loosened its grip on the city, bringing opportunity to the former company town—some in the form of business, some in the form of crime. The ancient train station, long fallen into disuse, was the first to go, and a new—and rather ugly—modern aluminum shack replaced it for the few passengers that still used the trains here. The old arena was gone, too, torn down and replaced by a factory that hired a handful of people to keep the drones operating properly. All the managers working there were people who had irritated the dragon enough to be punished, but not enough for him to recall them to Germany to be served to him at lunchtime. Sudbury was a hole in a lot of ways, one that was hard to escape. The last time anyone had called the downtown core "good" would have been a few centuries ago.

Still, any biz looked good when the alternative was to return to the Fish—the place that had once been the Whitefish Indian Reserve just outside of town. That was where the Donovan and Flourmill Barrens now threw their cast-outs, people too poor and unwanted that even the gutters puked them up. Just a bunch of wooden shacks thrown together with whatever was available, far inferior to even the colonial homes due to a lack of proper tools or construction skills A single store that took whatever it could in exchange for expired foodstuffs and threadbare used clothing. Sometimes payment came in the form of lives given to the whorehouses, bunraku parlors, and streets of what used to be the province of Ontario so that the other members of a family might survive one more pathetic winter.

Slag drew herself up to go back to her squat over the Coulson Hotel, laughing to herself that the place hadn't held that name for almost fifty years at this point, but the label was as engrained into the place as the cheap booze was. A drekking horrible apartment over a place that played horrible trog rock far too late into the ...

Try as she might, she could not figure out why her thoughts suddenly stopped right then and there, but it was just static until she heard the gunshot and coughed up a metallic taste of blood. Looking down, her cheap party clothes that took far too much cred off her stick from the successful job she was celebrating were now being ruined with her own blood. And the tacky bullet hole in the front. Then the ground rushed up at her.

She never hit it.

Instead, she found herself on some bleak and black plane of existence. At first he only thing she saw was herself, but as she slowly turned around, someone else appeared in her vision. He was ancient, skin tanned to leather, made of skin, bone, sinew, leather loincloth, and little else. Looking into Slag's eyes, his gaze felt like the weight of centuries, with wisdom far beyond any mortal understanding. He sat cross legged on a grey coyote pelt, shuffling a deck of oversized cards. "Where am I? Who are you? What ..." Slag stuttered. She was having trouble focusing. She didn't know what to think of the person in front of her, other than that he probably was some form of shaman.

"Yeah yeah yeah," he said. "You're dead, I'm here, it's all cryptic, so on, so forth. I'll tell you, they say patience comes with age, but I say whoever says that is talking out their hoops. Me, I like to claim I speak from careful thought and wisdom, but so do they, so maybe I also talk out my ass, eh?"

"Who *are* you?" Slag asked, confused on every level. Her thoughts were clearing, a little, with the encouragement of her sucking chest wound, though somehow that pain had fallen to a dull ache. Like it had happened far away and long ago, and possibly to someone else, "You kind of look like that guy who played Daniel Howling Coyote on that horrible edutainment tridflick."

"Maybe I am that actor. Maybe I'm actually Daniel Howling Coyote. Maybe I'm Coyote himself. Maybe I'm Death, and I'm tired of looking like I just stepped off of a Blue Öyster Cult album cover. Maybe I'm just a dying dream that makes letting go easier. Maybe I'm the reason you shouldn't be drinking that skunky beer that they sell at the Ledo." He riffle shuffled the cards in his hands, "I'm sure we can both agree that I'm the type that gets off on being mysterious."

"Oh great. Don't tell me this is what I get for eternity," Slag said, cracking her neck as she shifted her head to one side, hands clenching into fists.

"That's good. Get your wits back! That's what the living do! Plus, maybe get some emotions. You'll need them if you hope to make it through tonight, so give into your hate. Your love. Whatever. The point is, you'll need some passion. Find it." The shaman smiled, his ancient face looking like dry wall cracking as he lay down a card on the middle of the pelt, facedown. "Hmm. The Higher Power, inverse. Debt, servitude, weakness. You." The words flowed as if he knew everything about the woman before him, and he could really see the card's front.

Suddenly, Slag found herself staring into a space station hanging between the moon and the Earth, rapidly zooming to a single window, showing her younger form, chained to a heater, floating helplessly while her mother cowered and repeated, "This is the best for her, she'll get a SIN" as the slitch always did when the beatings, and worse, started to come for them. From him. The crack of her father's belt as he slammed its supple synthleather into her mother's flesh could be heard as the scene faded. Slag felt the scars from those beatings along her arms. She remembered that she got the buckle at the end of that particular whipping. Slowly, the scene returned to only darkness and the shaman.

"Interesting vision, I hope. The first of many. Learned something, or maybe remembered where you came from." He said it seriously, as if teaching a lesson. Then he saw her face, and his expression turned to stone. He clearly realized that he was speaking to deaf ears. He laid another card down, up and to the right of the first, also face down. "Three of Coins. Skilled labor, cooperation, team. Desire."

And as before, the scene changed for Slag, shifting to some kind of shop with three customers, who could be seen pouring over some floor plans, which somehow looked uniform and corporate. Their forms came into focus, with Slag herself on the left, a little older and scarred, holding some kind of rifle with wooden parts that were engraved and festooned with fetishes. The other two figures were strangers to her, but some kind of agreement, maybe even trust, seemed to be felt. The center-most person was a hobgoblin, semi-rare in what used to be Canada, pouring over the plans like an architect, looking for anything that could be exploited. The third was an ork, dressed in street attire, as invisible in some areas as a human in a suit is in others, showing a face with the scars of countless fights and a willingness to take the beatings of countless more. Then the blackness and shaman returned.

"Oh, this one goes deep," he told Slag without letting her have a chance at speaking. "The Avatars. Soul, inner-peace, self-acceptance, trials overcome." He laid the card face down just to the right of the first card. "Path."

And then Slag saw herself projected above him, as if the color settings on a trideo was broken. There were three of her, in red, green, and blue, but each was different. Warrior in red warpaint like was fashionable in the '50s. Scholar in green, entwined in Matrix code. Healer in blue, a bear pelt upon her, the muzzle like a crown. She stared at this for a moment, then fell backwards as the image dissipated, falling painfully on her hoop, some part of the back of her thoughts irritated that the pain in her skinny ass hurt worse than the gunshot through her chest.

That was it. She had it with the nonsense. "What the fuck is all this drek? This scene is just a collection of horrible trid stereotypes! Some horrible person's idea of what dying is like, only without the tunnel and light! And you, enigmatic slot that you are, just sitting there and telling me that this is for my betterment? Or a vision of what I might be? Can we even get any more trideotypical? No, I take that back, Tarot cards aren't even shamanic!" It was past time to gain some bit of control over the situation.

"Oh? So you know all about what is going on? And all about what magic is now? And who says I'm a shaman? Or even a metahuman?" He stared directly into her eyes with a glow that made the centuries his gaze had witnessed seem like mere moments. He drilled right into the core of Slag's soul and filled her with great fear. "Ace of Batons," he said. "Origin, overcome, initiative. Life path." He slapped the card down on the coyote fur, below and to the right of the first card.

Slag briefly saw a spectral hand holding an engraved walking stick behind many stars. A constellation she had never seen before burned at her, scarring itself into her mind and soul. Burned so deep that she'd carry it to the grave.

"Boring," the shaman announced as he came back into her view. "You've already done that step tonight." He pulled out another card. "This one, however—ah, yes. Two of Coins. Profit, economic balance, commerce. Erroneous values!" He finished with a shout.

And the poor girl saw herself once more, flipping through one augmented reality window after another, trying to sell more and more, balances and budget, stay in the black as more and more red appeared and she grew paler, more frustrated, defeated.

"I won't find my balance by going after mere nuyen?" she asked herself. "No, no, that actually makes sense. I mean, it was never about getting rich. Just getting away. Away from the Fish, from what I was. Getting what I deserved, what should have been mine. For frag's sake, I don't even want to smash the system. Just get out of it. Hell, just get enough skills so that I can go into the bush and disappear, live off the land. It would be a hard life, and a lonely one, but a life! But if I can fight, why should I not? What the hell is this all for?"

"Hmph, I had wondered if I was wasting my time here," the shaman said as he came back, "So, let's continue. Oh, my!" He cried out, "The Bastard! A powerful portent indeed!" This card came up and to the left, like he was trying to make some form of diamond. "Freedom, adventure, intoxication, frenzy. Your strengths."

For once, Sarah did not see herself, but a strange elf, who had painted his face mostly white, save for a clown-like red lips and diamonds over his eyes. He was framed by a shattered window as papers and loose objects flew out of the building, as if the clown was perched so high up there was different air pressure between the inside and out. He stood over a suit, so generic as to be forgettable save that he clung to his life by a single hand, begging for his life. A gengineered animal drifted down past the window for some reason. The elf took a long drag off his cigarette as it smoked outside the room he barely stood inside of. He looked right at her with a gaze that announced "I'll see you soon," then stepped on the man's hand. There was a scream as he fell out of the vision.

"I don't envy you that meeting," he shaman told Sarah. "Please, try to remember that he will never be on your side. The only side he has is his own, just like all the rest of us. As for you and me, just four more cards, then we'll be done. I can tell that you want to be free of me, and let's face it, the Leafs are playing tonight and we both want to try to catch them. Four of Blades, Inverse. Exile, ostracism, segregation. Weakness."

Once again, she saw her father, this time in an operating room, the teleoperated drone's surgical blades whirring like a blender into the asshole's chest, and she could hear that monstrous judge's statement that her SIN wasn't legitimate, as her father's death before her twenty-first birthday invalidated it. He sold her to the corporate-run juvenile prison, feeding her to all the horrors within. The criminal SIN connected to it prevented her from being hired in any capacity, despite the fact that she had just been taken in as an orphan. The gavel fell and sentenced her to a life of crime, all due to her guilt of being thirteen years old.

"Why? Why are you doing this?" Sarah sobbed, feeling more and more of herself shatter at the scenes before her, crying freely for the first time in her life.

"Why haven't you dealt with this yet? You want and hate all parts of these, yet you've never dealt with them. You live that day over and over again, and why? Make these things no longer the reason why you merely exist. Find your own reason and strength." He sat back, waiting for her to stop crying. The simple question cut right to the woman's heart, and she steeled herself as never before, meeting his impossibly ancient eyes, and simply nodded, demanding more. He smiled gently while drawing a new card, "Self-image, maybe in the future. Queen of Cups. Fair words, loving, intelligent, wise."

Sarah looked upon a new form of herself, much older, facing a bear, holding a chalice that held a soothing drink for all that came to her. She saw in her own face peace, contentment, compassion. Sarah could not believe it in any way, but the older version of herself only nodded at her knowingly.

The aged man smiled at her, "A possible future, even if you can't believe what your face obviously shows. Ten of Batons. Success, but it doesn't bring safety. This, this is your inner purpose." He slammed into the core of her being while casually holding out a new card to lay down.

Sarah, with no other name that she would now recognize, saw from the first person as she held a two-meter length of pipe. She was surrounded by many, many bleeding and groaning bodies of various metatypes, each having once held one of nine other clubs of various improvised materials. She looked over and saw a woman and almost a dozen children cowering in a squat, eyes glinting with a faint hope of some kind of survival, anything that could keep them going until something better found them. A full-on riot was happening around the scene, the mob angry and thirsting for blood of anyone and everyone, especially the easily destroyed.

"A defender. More are needed in this world than ever before," the shaman told her as she looked to him, the scene now gone from her sight. "As for the tenth card ..."

She moved forward, grabbing the card on instinct, holding it close to her chest, both sides appearing to her like the card backs, no face showing at all. "Mine!" she demanded, as if it was a lifeline to a drowning woman.

"Of course," the shaman said. "These are all yours. Everything here tonight is made of possibilities, potentials, and portents for the future. Each and every single card is a piece of your soul—past, present, future. But which do you feed, or accept as yourself? That question even one such as I can't answer. Only you can figure that out as you take your steps, make your choices, pay the prices. Survival isn't sure, either, for that card, right there, speaks of just that, the events that come immediately after you leave here. I cannot read it while it dwells in your hand. What is that card? So that I may tell you what it means?"

She looked at him, hard, unable to properly answer, but a different response worked into her mind by instinct. "Mine, and mine alone." She made her announcement to all that had ears to hear with what strength she had left from the emotional screwfest she had just been through.

The ancient and lined face cracked again with a grin. "Wisdom indeed. Good. Mystery is part of the living as well, for the dead know far, far too much. And they never shut the hell up. Now, sit here, listen. You shall learn how to properly sing and heal some of the wounds done in this fallen world." The shaman that might be Death, Daniel Howling Coyote, Coyote, or whatever else stepped toward her, a song of magic emanating from him that could not be heard but was still deafening.

And in the filthy grey and half-melted snow, Sarah "Slag" Millersson died. Then her ruined lungs attempting to hum this new song talked to her and taught her from a place beyond death.

Her eyes opened to the slate sky, and ...

DECK BUILDING

"System diagnostics complete. Mainframes Alpha, Beta, and Gamma fully operational, no anomalies or defects detected. Awaiting new commands," said the propeller-beanie-wearing platypus in a very crisp electronic voice.

Glitch grunted in satisfaction, his breath visible in the cold. It would have taken a lesser tech forty-eight to fifty hours to complete this job, but he did it under twenty. "All right Cecil. Initiate protocol zero-zero-four," he replied "And send following message to Admins 02 and 03. Begin: Bull, Fred, the new hardware's installed, and data transfer to the emergency archives should be complete within twenty-four hours. When complete, give the program codes a final once-over so we can transfer JackPoint to the new node. Inform me of any problems or issues. End message and send."

The platypus finished writing on a paper notepad with an oversized pencil as the propeller spun up. Stuffing pad and pencil into its pouch, Cecil gave a sharp salute before flying off into the electronic ether. Glitch chuckled. He'd been using that particular agent for what, over a decade? Yeah, Cecil's code was updated and state of the art, in sharp contrast to his slightly pixelated, overly cartoony graphics. It worked, and he didn't care what anyone else thought. Let them mock, if they dared. Cecil had been a gift, the last one he'd gotten from ...

Glitch re-buried those memories as he rubbed his hands together and surveyed the Cold Room, the current physical location of JackPoint's servers and equipment. Glitch liked this room. The machine's ambient sounds were soothing, the cold comforting.

But the job was done. Shoving a hand into his jacket pocket, he raised the other and moved his fingers in a specific pattern, remote-accessing his PAN. Various AR windows popped up in his field of vision, showing the current status of things ranging from new e-mails, private messages, data searches, JackPoint status, and even what his auto-cooker was making for dinner. Soy-beef stew, yummy.

At two steps from the door, another ARO sprang to life; an incoming commcall. Out of reflex, Glitch almost dismissed it, preferring to listen to the voice message later. But when he recognized this particular commcode, his heart skipped a beat with equal parts excitement and dread. He quickly accepted, but his greeting died in his throat as the image link engaged. He'd been expecting someone else and now his appetite was destroyed, replaced by a not-small amount of anger.

The caller was a human female, forty-four years old, brown hair in her usual conservative bun with tailored cybereyes that currently were cobalt blue. She also sported some very dark circles under them that weren't makeup. Glitch almost wished he cared why, but he was well beyond that with her.

"Give me one good reason I shouldn't find and brick your 'link," he growled.

"It's good to see you, too. I knew you wouldn't answer any of my codes, so I used this one."

"Which was never meant for you. You haven't answered my question."

His fingers were already prepping the data spike.

She gritted her teeth. "Can you stop being an ass and let me explain? You owe me that much."

The search was already complete, and the attack program ready. All he needed was to twitch a finger. "Wrong. I don't owe you anything, Victoria. Or have you forgotten all the drek, all the pain, you and your family put me, put *us* through before you finally stabbed me in the back? Your mother still calls me the ex-bastard-in-law?"

"Ghost, will you just *listen*? For *once*?"

"Fine. One chance, one sentence. Make it count."

Victoria pressed her lips together, tears welled in her eyes. "Angelica is missing."

Glitch dismissed the attack program. "When?"

"A month ago. We tried to find her ourselves, and you know my uncle. But now he's missing too. If there was any other way. I know you hate me and my family, but this is not about them. It's about your daughter."

Glitch seethed at not being called sooner. "I assume you already have leads?"

She nodded.

"Send me everything, and I mean *everything* you've got. And if I find out this is some kind of con or power play ..."

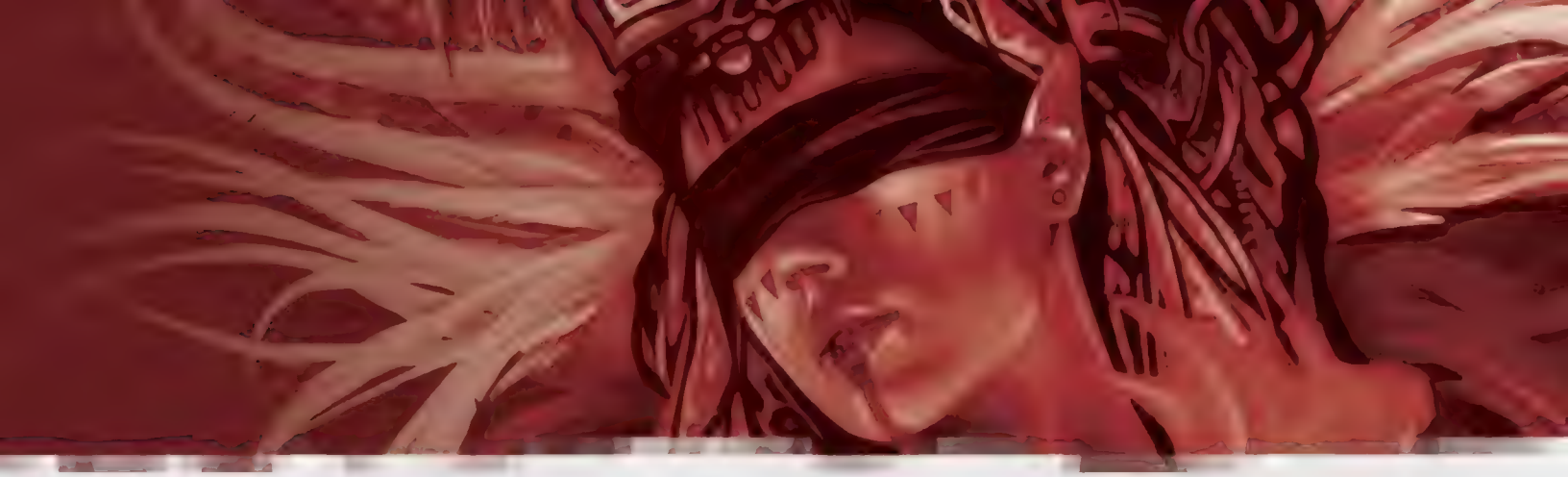
"*Jesus*! Do you think that I'd even joke about ..."

Snapping his fingers, Glitch terminated the call and leaned against the doorway. Two-point-three seconds later, a data packet arrived. Walking through the door, he tossed his jacket aside as AR images and data files opened. Bee-lining to his workroom, he read everything as he walked. Most of it was basic stuff, things that Victoria should have been able to follow up on. But then, for reasons he wasn't sure why, a particular image caught his attention.

The image shown Angelica at a café. According to the time/ID stamp, it was taken by a friend. She was leaning over, studying something in her hands. Glitch zoomed in and saw ... a card? Running the image through his own custom ID software, he confirmed that it was in fact, the back of a tarot card.

Why did this seem important?

Taking a deep breath, Glitch plugged into his deck and went to work.



/Request Access: Node 78-22-54/4
Clearing House/Password: **********
/Password Accepted/Have a Nice Day!/

POSTED BY: GLITCH

If you've accessed this area, then it's safe to say you're looking for paydata pursuant to the Sixth World Tarot. But before you get too far into this, I'm going to address a few things.

First, there's gonna be extra nom de plumes floating around here because Bull, Slamm-0!, and I reached out to our shadow-brethren across the globe. Why? Because this situation is larger than I had anticipated. And to be blunt, JackPoint doesn't have the resources or reach necessary to tackle this subject and situation by ourselves.

Okay, that wasn't too painful.

We'll be cooperating with the re-launched Asgard Data Haven (congrats to Orbital DK as Admin), the Denver Data Haven/Nexus (glad to see you guys are okay), the Draconian Informational Virtual Exchange/DIVE, Frozen Shadows in the Northern UCAS, The Helix from Europe, Mosaic from Southeast Asia via Vladivostok (long story), and some members from other VPNs.

- Reminds me of Shadowland.
- Bull

- Yeah, can't wait for all the bickering, idiocy, dead-end leads, agendas, red-herrings, raging egos, and flame wars to start. *Good times ahead!*
- Scattershot

- Whoa! Someone's more curmudgeon-ey-er than Bull!
- /dev/ grrl

With the help of Asgard and Helix, a linked JackPoint sub-node designated ***Clearing House*** has been created to share information about the SWT. But it's far from complete or comprehensive at this point.

Ground rules: Be nice and keep the pissing contests to a minimum. And if anyone here tries anything stupid (everyone knows what and who I'm talking to) and deliberately messes with the other data havens, we will, by mutual agreement among the sysops, not only ban your sorry asses but also nuke your 'link, deck, or whatever. And *then* we'll trash you and your rep with a fury that'd make the GOD take pause. Think we're bluffing? Go ahead and pull that trigger.

Consider this your first and only warning.

And now that the standard disclaimers and threats are out of the way ...

- So when did you develop an interest in the occult/weird, other than biz of course?
- Lyran

- I have a personal stake in this. Leave it at that.
- Glitch

WHAT WE KNOW

(THIS WON'T TAKE LONG)

Short answer: Not very much.

A year or two ago, rumors and talk started hitting the Matrix. People were seeing odd images in dreams, having senses of déjà vu, that sort of thing. Then the cards started to show up, along with talk of this so-called Sixth World Tarot. Some had images of those visions, dreams, and so on. Some cards also depicted people and in some cases events—some events people recognized from their lives, some that came to pass after the card appeared, and many that have not yet occurred. As far as we know. Then it went viral. Right now, the SWT is something of an underground phenomenon. For now.

As far as how and why this is happening—especially "why now"—there's a lot of speculation and debate. Some see the cards as powerful artifacts. Others think they're fulfilling their purpose as divination devices but on a scale never before seen. Some see them as another commodity. Most see them as a new fad.

Everyone has an opinion, but little to back it up.

- What else is new?
- Glass Cannon

- One of the popular theories is that the SWT is the manifestation of a new kind of spirit released by mana spikes during the events in Yellowstone.
- Lady Greenfire

- Except for the initial mana spikes, mana levels are returning to normal. With all due respect, that theory is a bunch of drek.
- eX-Professor

- Except that it's not just coming down, it's continuing to decrease. Something has changed.
- Ecotoope

- Really. Citation?
- eX-Professor

- Didn't think so.
- eX-Professor

- What about all that stuff going on in Tír na nÓg? What's it called, "The Veil?"
- Earther

- More on that later. Still working on it.
- Old Crow

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

At this point there are people at various levels of power and influence who're investigating the SWT for whatever reasons. Whatever those reasons are, the fact is that many different people want them. And when people want something, it's not long before the shadows get involved. Regardless of what the SWT is, the cards and data regarding them are a hot commodity.

And let's face it, most of the time, we're reacting to events around us, doing things because we were asked. This time, we have an opportunity to be pro-active. Compared to everyone else, we're on an almost level playing field. Let that sink in. Usually someone is already five steps ahead. Not this time. In this race we're almost at a dead heat, and we have a chance to actually be ahead of the game. So for starters, let's take a look at who we know is currently investigating the SWT.

- I'm just here to find out why I keep seeing the same human biff wearing a fancy green headdress with some big black cat and a green bird on one of those card things as well as in my dreams. If anyone can help, send me a PM.
- Knucklebuster

THE MEAN STREETS

(MOVING BETWEEN NEON & SHADOW)

POSTED BY: JOYGIRL-IX

Bonjour mes amis...

Before we get too far into world-spanning conspiracies and far-reaching implications of powerful individuals and beings at the top rungs of power, I want to remind everyone that most of what we know about the Tarot so far has mainly come from sources on the streets.

It's been the average person, usually just trying to live their lives that've been among the first to be touched by the Tarot. How and why this is happening is still a mystery. But in some cases, their lives are turned upside down and forever changed when a card enters their life.

- How can we tell if they're real? Or, are they even part of this deck, or set, or whatever. Or are there multiple variations of these cards or different decks? Is the Tarot a single deck, or are there multiple decks out there? What about these card projectors that have been showing up? And how do we ... never mind. *Sigh.* Too many fragging questions.
- Lyran

I'm one such individual. Four months ago, I found myself in Manhattan. Long story short, I took a job for a Mr. Johnson that despite his best efforts couldn't quite hide the Celtic notes in his voice. The job was a long-term infiltration of a Wuxing exec's life to retrieve an item; specifically, a tarot card.

When I actually saw the card for the first time, it almost derailed everything because it featured my image, while on my current job. I almost cut and ran, but I knew better and finished the job. Mr. Johnson merely smiled, as if I'd passed some test. His cryptic comment of "only you could have accomplished this" only made things worse. I haven't seen that Johnson again. Since then, the Tarot has become an obsession of mine, especially *that* card, which I discovered was the Queen of Cups. It's still in my dreams. And while I still work, I investigate on the side, learning all I can. Others have discovered more, but one has to start somewhere.

TRIAD CONNECTIONS

Soon after my job, the mark, Daniel Li, head of special projects at Prometheus Engineering, was found dead in his apartment from "natural causes." A contact gave me a heads up before the news officially broke, and I was on the first sub-orbital out of Manhattan. Apparently, my instincts were correct. Just before I left, I heard from my NY fixer that I'd angered the Red Dragon Society. Three

of their best agents, known collectively as One, paid my former doss a visit, with a few mercs in tow for good measure. My contacts inform me that One still wants to have a little chat. That's all right; I learned how to disappear a long time ago. Just another reason to watch my back.

- I've been wondering why the Red Dragons sent One back to Manhattan. I'd originally surmised it was because the Yellow Lotus were trying to broker backdoor deals with various Prometheus execs. But this explains a bit more because One has been doing a lot of traveling in Asia and the Middle East in the past few weeks, backed up by their pet mercenaries of the Fifth-Eight Battle Brigade.
- Lei Kung

- I'm more interested in the fact that Daniel Li had a card in his personal possession.
- Winterhawk

- Just before Wuxing acquired them, there were rumors that PE was working on what they called "next generation mana-technology." Do we know if anyone else at PE or Wuxing has cards or what these projects may have been?
- Clockwork

- Unknown, but if One is involved, that means Lung is. He doesn't send his favorite troubleshooters out on milk runs.
- Wyrm Watcher

BLACK MARKET BATTLES AND SMUGGLER'S BLUES

During my investigations into the Tarot, I've spoken with people ranging from squatters to tenured academics and every shadow-type known. But it's been the smugglers and black marketers who've provided the most information. Not all of it has been legit, but it shows how the Tarot is becoming one of the hottest new commodities on the black markets. Even data regarding rumored card sightings can sometimes fetch prices into the tens of thousands of nuyen. Transporting or even obtaining an actual card costs significantly more.

As a result, there are those who've taken advantage of the situation—instances of bootleg cards or false data have begun to flood the markets. Reported instances of Mr. Johnsons going after forgers with extreme prejudice or taking their frustrations out on smugglers or couriers who, through no fault of their own, happen to deliver fakes are rising. This has led many, even those not involved with the Tarot, to hire more security personnel or take additional security measures for their protection.

- Which slots me off. This SWT biz is fraying ties with a lot of trusted associates. A former chummer of mine, one that I've worked with for over a decade, turned on me because he thought I was running one of those cards on my last job. He was offered 75K to get it. Broke my heart when I splattered his brains on my deck, but I needed to send a message that I won't deal with those things. And you shouldn't frag with me.
- Sounder

- I'm more concerned with bootleg tarot cards because there's still no reliable way to authenticate real ones. Assuming we had a workable definition of "real." Assensing gets rid of some outright fakes, but an awful lot of them manage to hold lingering magic.
- Lyran

- Bootleg cards with alchemical spells attached are also popping up. Dubbed "trap cards," they're used for a wide range of nasty surprises, the most common being elemental attacks. That magic you see in the card might be waiting to screw you.
- Balladeer

- In the Gulf, Mediterranean, and around Hong Kong, the local navies and Coast Guards have been beefing up their presence since several smuggler groups have started to employ heavier weaponry. Bidding Wars are becoming heavy on "war," less on "bidding." It's cutting into my profits, which is pissing me off.
- Kane

/NEW FILE DOWNLOADED /HELP WANTED

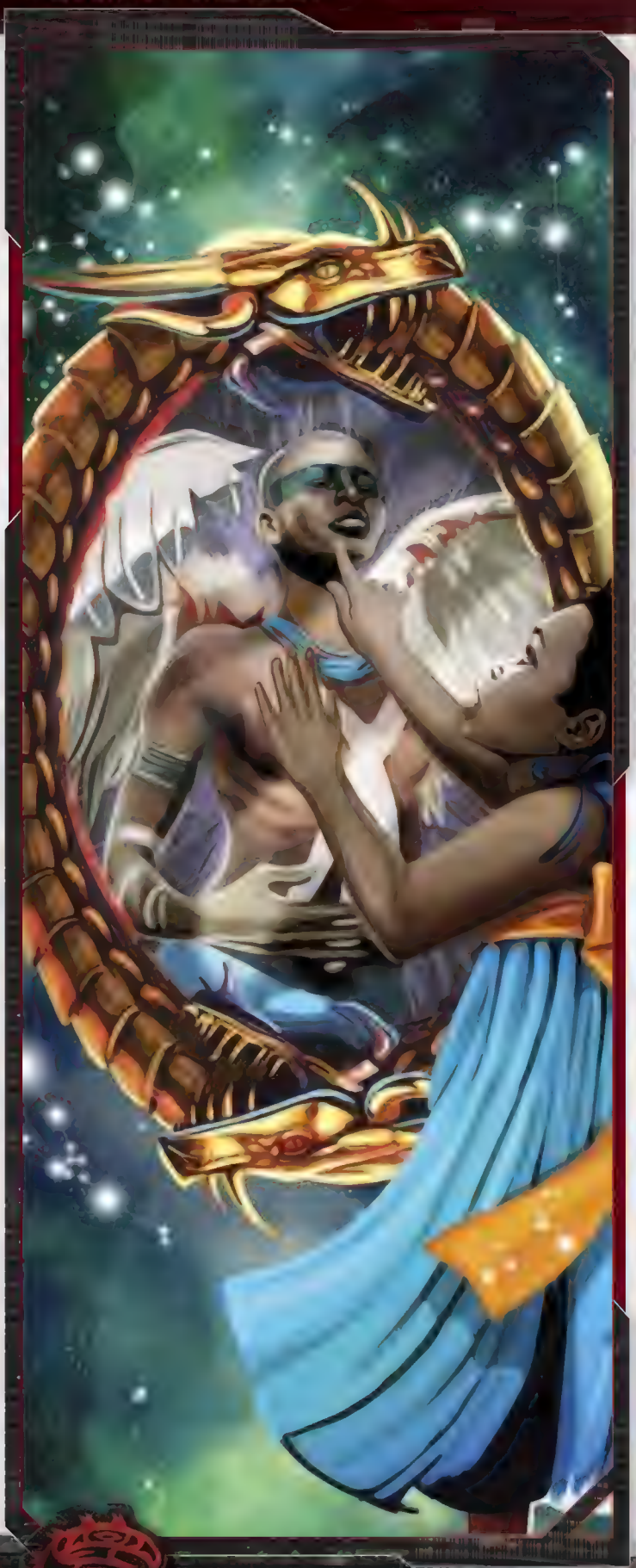
Johnson seeking specialists for potentially hazardous escort job in Carib League. Must have significant combat skills and provide own equipment. Nautical/maritime skills preferred but not necessary. Magicians, hackers, and vehicle specialists also welcome. Successful completion of job may lead to other regional opportunities in future.

Contact at: **LTG# CRL/CUB/HAV 123 (88-1121-367)**

HAPPY HALLOWEENER

I want to relay this specifically to our Seattle associates. Last month, my investigations led me to, of all places, the Halloweeners. Recently, their victories against much stronger rivals have shifted the dynamic of power in the Seattle streets. What got my attention was the rumor that Nightmare, the Halloweeners' current leader, may have obtained a real Tarot card.

Unfortunately, that's all I was able to determine. Weeks of infiltration efforts (I still feel like I need a shower



for what I did) came to nothing after the gang abandoned their primary safehouse. I bring it up only because once word gets out, the Seattle streets could go hot.

- This fits with a lot of things I've been hearing of late. The 'Weenies would have needed some kind of ace in the hole or major mojo to pull off the scores they did. Some more food for thought—I've heard that the dragon Urubia has been looking into them really hard, so be careful.
- Killian

VOICES IN THE ELECTRONIC ETHER

HERALDS OR TARGETS?

POSTED BY: GLITCH

For many, life is nothing but one long procession of monotony punctuated by brief spikes of excitement as the next big thing comes along to give their manufactured life some semblance of meaning. And for better or worse, the SWT has become that next big thing. But these are not professionals, the ones fighting the system. They are the cogs, the drones, the sheep, the living meat-bag statistics that keep corporations and bureaucracies running. And for better or worse, they've latched on to the SWT in order to leech out whatever meaning it may give their otherwise meaningless lives.

For those in the shadows, these people tend to be equal parts asset and obstacle.

DEALER NET

Dealer Net began its electronic life as just another P2.0 site that featured strange and unusual images. Eventually, slowly, people discovered those images could be found on a new kind of tarot card. At first, many thought it was part of some new marketing campaign for an upcoming product. But as more images were discovered, things took on a life of their own. People started to share "real, factual stories" about what the Tarot deck and individual cards meant. Then rumors started to blend with news and real life, and people started to attach their own interpretations of what was going on.

- And they also began to insert their own cards and images into the mix. You should see what some of the alternate versions were. The Awakened World for example, was definitely a bit more risqué. But also really hot.
- Electric Blue

- Some still consider those alternate versions the originals. And who knows, maybe they are.
- Arete

- There're *thousands* of other SWT-themed sites all over the Matrix. The SWT is also a current trending topic on P2.0 and other social media.
- /dev/grrl

Eventually, the traffic to the P2.0 page overwhelmed the servers and the site was terminated. Within a week however, a new dedicated network calling itself Dealer Net was up and running. Dealer Net bills itself as being the main hub of information regarding the SWT, featuring sections devoted to current rumors, the latest images, and "the most up-to-date map on card sightings." Unfortunately for our purposes, ninety percent of Dealer Net is either pure drek or overblown, ranting fantasy. But if you pay enough attention, every so often they find something legit.

- Dealer Net may not realize it, but the most accurate part of the site is the map. Its accuracy rate is well over the ten percent Glitch cites. Most likely because of the sheer amount of people who belong to this group and the lack of interpretation needed. See a card, report it—it's that simple. And they have eyes everywhere.
- Tribal DCS

- This would also be a great location for information manipulation and control. Network security is so poor, even a six-year-old with a Meta Link could hack this so-called network. Bunch of idiots at worst, a bunch of useful fools at best.
- Icarus

NEON ASCENSION

One of the most popular independent, pseudo-pirate 'trix-casts out there, *Neon Ascension*—NA to its fans—harkens back to the days of old-time AM radio and programs that "exposed" vast conspiracies and tried to explain strange phenomena such as aliens and the paranormal. Based out of LA and created by Kyle Blacklighter with Denise Greenfield, and Trevor "The Nightstalker" Darkholm, NA first hit grid five years ago. Its format was essentially the same as its spiritual predecessors, except it dealt with current Sixth World topics and featured your typical schlock-conspiracy stuff mixed with pseudo-science backed up by faux-investigative reporting and so-called "experts." Basically, Blacklighter and crew see themselves as some sort of modern crusader-types trying to help metahumanity by giving them "the truth."

Since its first show, listenership has been steadily growing, despite numerous attempts to silence them. Figures vary, but on average NA has a dedicated audience of at least ten million. And on that note, recent shows about the SWT consistently have the highest ratings. The most recent had an estimated fifteen million either listening live or downloading.

/DOWNLOADING AUDIO TRANSCRIPT/12-5-78/0222:34

Blacklighter: Well we've apparently lost Sally from Broken Bow. Let's see who we've got waiting. Ah … huh, this should be interesting, *The Freemason* from—well, it appears he's declined to offer a location. No big, we don't exactly give out ours. <chuckles> Well then, Mr. Freemason, go ahead, you're on *Neon Ascension*!

Freemason: I would like to reference an earlier caller, the one from Atlanta who talked about how the Tarot cards are produced. I know how they are produced.

Blacklighter: Really? That's, well, amazing. Please go on sir.

Freemason: The cards are not mere objects. They are a manifestation given form. And like anything else, they have a source. The source for these cards is not anything metahuman made. Each card is slightly different, manifested from a source card, a *master card*, if you …

Darkholm: A what, mate? Sounds like something me granny used before credsticks. Bollocks, this is.

Freemason: *Do not mock me!* I called here in good faith, to try to point you in the right direction. Because I know one of you is searching, searching for something—or rather someone. Have you found your poor Angel yet, Mr. Blacklighter?

Blacklighter: A-a-ah, th-thank you for the call, Mr. Mason, very informative. Well, we're, ah, at that time, time for a break. We'll be back in ten, so set your chrono.

Darkholm: What?! We've got seven more min…

<END TRANSCRIPT>

- So does the paydata they give out have any worth?
- Questgiver

- Hard to tell. As far as we know, some top corp or government spy is feeding them grade-A misinformation.
- Sunshine

- From the outside, things look great for NA. But there's a lot of turmoil behind the scenes. Four months ago, Denise Greenfield left the show a week ago after an altercation

with Kyle Blacklighter over his increasing obsession over—wait for it—the SWT. Blacklighter kept pushing for more and more SWT coverage on the show, while Greenfield said he was ignoring more important stories. Kyle pulled the "it's *my* show" card (no pun intended), and Denise walked. Darkholm was little help; he was off looking to score another hit of tempo.

- Old Crow

- Something happened about a month ago with Blacklighter. Rumors place him at a party in El Inferno—supposedly he was there to see a friend about an actual SWT card. He left in a damn hurry shortly after arriving, looking like he'd seen a ghost. Since then, he's been hitting up local fixers, trying to secure protection.
- Earthquake Jones

- He's already got it.
- Glitch

ORACLE SOCIETY

ACADEMIA UNBOUND

POSTED BY: ELIJAH

With so much conflicting and contradictory information, it's genuinely difficult to get solid data on the Tarot. But there are those who are willing to try. Founded in early 2078, the Oracle Society was among the first to take the Sixth World Tarot seriously and recognize it for what it may be. Most of what is publicly known about the Tarot comes from their efforts.

The Oracle Society is the brainchild of Fargus Sol and the late Herbert Shane, both PhD/Ts of Advanced Magical Theory at the University of Prague. The two of them started discussing rumors about the Tarot and decided they should investigate. Eventually, others heard of their work. A year later, a collective of professors and scientists became more official, in an unofficial way, and they christened themselves the Oracle Society.

Their mandate is the continued academic study of the Sixth World Tarot with the goal of proving its origins and authenticity. The society has over fifty core members from all over the world and over one hundred associates who aid the society in field research. This research is available only to Society members and select associates. Admittance into the society is also strict; generally only five percent of applicants are accepted. It's also rumored that the Society has at least three Tarot cards in their possession, locked away in a secret location. These cards (supposedly) are: the King of Coins, the Three of Coins, and the Seven of Blades.

- One of those associates is rumored to be the great dragon Schwartzkopf.
- Winterhawk

- Approximately six months ago, Dr. Shane was found dead in Morocco. Cause of death: decapitation. Also, his body and villa were burned to the foundation. Soon after the news broke, Schwarzkopf had a five-hour meeting with Sol. The content of the meeting is still unknown, but afterwards Sol traveled to the UK.
- Frosty

- Interesting. Arleesh and her current voice, Kendra de Santos, met frequently with Schwartzkopf over the past two months. Oh, to be privy to those conversations.
- Wyrm Watcher

- I'm not sold on the Society's "purely academic" image. We have nothing but their word as to the authenticity of their so-called data. I think they're stringing us along.
- Icarus

- What do we know about the projector devices. They seem to have an aura, much like a focus made of metal.
- Shang Dao

- The first such device I ever heard of was spotted in the Western Sahara region of Morocco about six months ago.
- Goat Foot

- Hmmm. Herbert Shane was found dead in Morocco at about the same time. Anyone else think this isn't a coincidence?
- Sunshine

- Dunno, but these Oracles are great for a hefty payday. After three of their members went missing, the Oracles now hire appropriate escorts. They must have money to burn because I can charge at least three times the current rate, and they don't seem to care.
- The Canuck

/NEW FILE DOWNLOADED/HELP WANTED /BACK TO SCHOOL

Mr. Johnson seeks specialists for long-term investigation/infiltration operation. Must be multi-lingual and/or able to speak Czech fluently. Must be able to pass as student (appropriate age or able to simulate) or staff. Matrix and breaking-and-entering skills preferred, but not necessary. Magicians or Awakened receive preferential consideration.

Contact at: **LTG# EUR/CZR/PRG 313 (32-6684-845)**

CORPORATE INTERESTS

POWER AND PROFIT

POSTED BY: CORPORATE RAIDER

It's no surprise that corporations are constantly looking for opportunities to increase their profit margins and power. To this end, they keep their eyes open so that they do not miss what opportunities may arise. In keeping tabs on the mechanisms of corporate operations, I've noticed that four corporations seem to be taking the lead in digging up information on the Tarot. That, of course, is only the situation for now; as events shift, so too will attitudes toward the Tarot.

AZTECHNOLOGY

Recently, Aztechnology has been tougher to crack than usual. Most disturbing is that almost all of my informants (and those from other associates) from within the corp have gone silent. Just before this blackout started three weeks ago, I received a message about a new project called *Fullero,* or "card sharp," and that Aztechnology operatives have been reported in areas of Tarot card sightings.

Walks like a duck ...

- Thank General Armando Salazar, Aztlan Army (Retired) for the blackout. He was the head of the secret weapons project during the war that created the anti-dragon weapon that took down Sirrurg. Guess he's officially on the payroll now. Salazar's first priority would be to secure all current Aztechnology special projects by plugging any possible leaks corp-wide. Don't count on any wageslaves or middle managers talking to people like us anytime soon. If Project: Fullero is Aztechnology investigating the SWT, Salazar would be the perfect man for the job.
- Rifleman

MITSUHAMA COMPUTER TECHNOLOGIES (MCT)

Before participating in Clearing House, I'd liberated several pulses of MCT paydata and their efforts regarding the SWT. Unfortunately, liberating it was comparatively easy to decrypting it.

What I've decrypted indicates that MCT has been investigating the SWT for two years now using a corporation-wide task force, spearheaded by **Thaumaturgical Research Unit 13.** The bulk of the research being conducted by former Collison Biotech employees, along with a number of captive technomancers scouring the Matrix for leads.

My data also indicates that MCT has at least eight cards. Which ones, or if they're genuine, is unknown.

/OPEN FILE/THAUMATURGICAL RESEARCH UNIT 13, A.K.A. TRU-13/

A black ops unit for MCT specializing in magical threats or situations, its mandate has been expanded by their corporate masters. Their current objective is to lead a MCT task force with the goal of obtaining a complete SWT deck.

Lead by Kaze Adeki, the rest of TRU-13's identities is a guarded secret. It consists of: two or three magicians, three combat specialists, an infiltrator, Matrix specialist, and rigger. TRU-13 is described as "ruthlessly efficient and completely loyal to Mitsuhama." Failure is not an option.

- What?! I thought that we'd shut down Collison permanently! And don't get me started on Unit 13! They took so many of us.
- Netcat

- MCT apparently took the Collison leftovers and rebranded it Valkyr, Inc. I'll PM you the rest of the data.
- Butch

SAEDER-KRUPP

S-K is currently devoting their efforts on one card: The Dragon. Internal eyes-only memos from S-K Prime indicate this item is an "extremely high priority for recovery. All information and leads will be immediately forwarded to the new Office of Priority Appropriation." And before anyone asks, this new office came into being eight months ago and is headed by Hans Brackhaus himself. We're all smart enough to figure things out from there.

- Do we know if anyone has that card?
- Mission Control

- No, but Brackhaus has been contracting a lot of runs against MCT. Could be the usual corp drek, or maybe not.
- Scattershot

- Lowfyr will make a play as soon as he finds it, no matter who has it.
- Wyrm Watcher

WUXING

Wuxing got involved with the SWT when senior VP of research, Daniel Li, bought a Tarot card on vacation in Vienna depicting the King of Coins. He displayed it on his desk, and weeks went by without incident until a janitor knocked it down. Moments later, the entire building began shaking as if in an earthquake.

A geomancer traced the energy to Li's office and noticed the card was inverted on the floor. Apparently, it seriously disrupted the entire building's mana flow. Long story short, the card was taken for study, and Wuxing started seeking more cards. While other corps devoted company resources to finding the SWT, Wuxing instead tasked their associates in the Triads with that task. The partnership has been fruitful. In addition to the King of Coins, Wuxing has also secured the Eight of Coins, Nine of Cups, and King of Cups.

- A card that can disrupt manaflow and shake a building—that's incredible!
- Lady Greenfire

- More like terrifying. If a single card can do that, imagine what the others may be capable of doing.
- eX-Professor

- Why didn't Li, whom I assume is a competent magician, sense the card's properties when he first acquired it. And then he just left something that valuable on his desk? Really?
- Winterhawk

- Going back to what Joygirl-IX said, I think that Wuxing is keeping their cards at the PE tower in Manhattan. Why? After the great quake, subsequent New York buildings have extreme construction standards and can handle up to a ten-pointer on the Richter easy. With the labs already in place, you can't get a better location!
- Machinist

- Good point? Here's another.: Joygirl claimed she retrieved a Queen of Cups, not King of Coins from Li. Where'd *that* come from? Something's not adding up.
- Chainmaker

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

BOUND BY RED TAPE

POSTED BY: KAY ST. IRREGULAR

Pardon me if this seems short, but Denver's situation continues to be rather dynamic. As of this writing, no government has officially recognized the existence of the Tarot or made any official statements about it. However, that means they're just keeping it quiet. That being said, I can verify that the UCAS is investigating through a joint FBT and Interpol task force. Sorry if that's not enough, but if anyone knows anything else, then speak up. The brief time I had for messaging is already over. Gotta move.

TASK FORCE 154

Until three months ago, the FBT's Awakened Research Division within the Department of Paranormal Affairs was a place where barely useful screw-ups were dumped, or where careers went to die. The ARD was basically a data-entry unit that occasionally assisted other agents. Then, a mandate was issued from the top brass, and the ARD had a bulldog of a new division lead and an Interpol liaison, and it was forced to do actual work instead of just cataloguing reports and sipping soykaf lattes. Task Force 154 was born, and it's had a rough start.

Despite a massive increase to their authority and budget, TF154 has problems. The lead agent, Rick Sorenson, tries to run the task force like a military unit, which goes about as well as expected when your team is composed mostly of slackers and bookworms. Lead analyst Amber Whitehouse constantly complains, causing her and Sorenson to constantly butt heads. Combine that dynamic with Interpol Agent Ian Decker's cheeky humor, and you've got something better suited as a primetime trid show than an investigative unit.

Still, they've stumbled into and solved a number of crimes during their investigations and accumulated a lot of data regarding the SWT. But because of their vague mandate, no one knows what specifically they're looking for.

- Interesting. TF154 doesn't seem interested in obtaining cards, but rather gathering information on those who are looking for or involved with the SWT.
- Fianchetto

- Because Kay's been busy, I pitched in. That mandate from the top comes indirectly from Senator Coleen McKinnon of Ohio. The good senator's husband was found dead in a DeeCee alley under a year ago. Seven months ago, his image was discovered on the Three of Blades.
- Sunshine

- FYI, there's a group known as The Headhunters who's targeting people investigating the SWT. Sometimes they only steal data; other times it's gotten bloody. Last month I was contracted for a rescue of three individuals. No details for obvious reasons, but the principles were severely tortured and near death when we found them. The Headhunters had the skills and hardware worthy of a top-tier SpecForce unit. Someone's taken off the kid gloves, so watch your six.
- Rifleman

- Weren't you in Morocco before that, Rifleman? That place is pretty popular lately.
- Ork CEO

< OPENING AUDIO FILE #2215-941-B. ORIGINATOR: INTERPOL AGENT IAN DECKER. SUBJECT: HEADHUNTERS >

I've completed my preliminary review of the commlink, evidence ID number 941-001A, anonymously mailed to the Brussels field office yesterday. Forensic techs say that there've been no alterations to the trideo contained therein that detailed the <ahem> rescue of Professors Werner, Shay, and O'Donnell. Except to hide the identity of said rescuers. Techs are already en route to the supposed location. Given the amount of small-arms fire observed, I'll be surprised if the building is still standing. Agents are also en route to UMC Saint Peter Hospital, to interview the survivors.

Of special interest, the rescuers took detailed images of the now-deceased abductors. Seven total, although facial recognition positively identified only one: Henry Beauchamp, former French Army, last seen four years ago in Aztlan. The abductors wore similar black BDUs and used mil-spec weaponry. The footage also indicates a high-level of proficiency with weapons and tactics. The abductors had at least one magician among them. The abductors also had similar tattoos, a stylized skull looking downward with crosshairs on the forehead. Research and information from contacts indicates they were a part of a new paramilitary or perhaps shadowrunning group called The Headhunters. This group has been tentatively linked to similar crimes across Europe and the Americas. Their goals are unknown.

Per protocol, I'm starting a master file and classifying them as a Level Three threat. Notifications to branch offices will be sent out by day's end. End recording.

- Out of professional courtesy, I'll advise you to cease that particular line of questioning for your personal health and safety.
- Rifleman

- Are you actually threatening me?
- Ork CE0

- No, because I'm not the one you need to worry about.
- Rifleman

THE REST

DANGLING THREADS

POSTED BY: ELECTRIC BLUE

Hello and welcome, everyone, to my little contribution, and I mean little. Glitch insisted on being as thorough as possible, so he told my twitching, hyperactive backside to touch on a few groups out there who're lurking in the periphery of the Tarot chase for now but could become major players.

DRACO FOUNDATION

Yep, it's everyone's favorite charitable organization! While they've done nothing directly, recent activities in regards to the SWT can be described as proxy-like. And given the magic reputation the cards are starting to build, expect the Draco Foundation's interest to grow rapidly. DF reps and agents have been burning up the travel kilos traveling hither and yonder, meeting with all sorts of interesting people including corporate-types, government officials, freelance specialists (oooo, scary), and the dragons, namely Lowfyr, Arleesh, Lung, (picking up on a theme here?). I also have it on good authority that DF watchers have orders to relay any SWT information ASA of fragging P.

What are they up to? Hard to say. But if I had to hazard a guess, I think Ms. Daviar is making sure her network and allies are all in place before she does, well *something*. So stay tuned kiddies!

- Blue forgot to mention that DF reps also met with Fargus Sol. I've also got data linking DF funds to the rescue of a particular trio of scientists. Maybe a bit of a quid pro quo?
- Wyrm Watcher

ROMANOV CLAN

A family, clan (or whatever) that traces their lineage back centuries have found themselves thrust into the middle of the SWT situation. Scattered throughout Eastern Europe, the typically low-ley clan is rumored to be the guardians of the SWT (or whatever it was before) and have collected sketches or photos of the majority of the cards, with some real cards in the mix as well. I know this may go counter to some established data, but as they say, that's my info and I'm sticking to it. Either way, their guardianship might have been a family honor, but now it's become a curse. Several Romanovs have been murdered recently, prompting the clan to scatter.

- Several bounties for the Romanov Clan have been issued. And more than a few have ended up on various "most wanted" lists as "persons of interest."
- Sticks

- Romanov? Any connection to Claudia Romanov?
- /dev/grrl

- Depends on who you ask. Most, including Claudia herself, claim she isn't. Others speak of a kind of excommunication. Recently, she's been seen with her (supposed) cousin Emily Llanfrechfa, daughter of British Lord Geraint Llanfrechfa. Who, coincidently, is known to be very handy with his family's own tarot deck.
- Corporate Raider

- Guess I should mention that someone broke into the Llanfrechfa manor in Wales and then died of a knife wound received elsewhere. Scotland Yard refuses to comment, but he looks very Romanov-esque.
- Chainmaker

THE HANDS OF FATE

Whereas the Headhunters mentioned earlier could pose a possible threat, The Hands of Fate are shaping up to be a certifiable nightmare. Rumors and circumstantial evidence indicate a loose alliance of individuals hunting and murdering those who may possess or have merely seen a SWT card.

Bloody handprints are nothing new at crime scenes, but more and more of them are showing up, especially at homicides, across Europe, North and South America, and even Hong Kong. Investigators disagree as to whether they're linked, but some handprint patterns are precisely the same at multiple scenes continents apart. Factor in the increasing number of messages showing up at sites such as Dealer Net, and this could be an indication of a death cult.

- I can corroborate some of this. I consulted with KE (fun, considering I'm ex-Star) on an attempted homicide, because I knew the victim. During a home invasion, the attackers cut several arteries on the victim. Before they left they said "Fate will decide if you live or die." The victim saw someone at Dante's Inferno who looked like the Seven of Coins and posted it on Dealer Net. Since then, there've been twelve similar attacks.
- Sunny Daze

- Sorry for intruding, but I'm looking for my chum Knucklebuster. My team got separated on a recent run and almost got gunned down by a fake Doc Wagon bird. 'Buster never made the rendezvous. I know this isn't totally pro, but I'm out of options and I knew he came here. PM me if you got data—I got cred for your time.
- Wildcard

SHIFTING PYRE

- One final bit here. This recording came into my hands through a run I recently arranged to look into some napalm that went missing from the UCAS Army. In the course of tracking it down, one of the team members infiltrated a new organization called the Shifting Pyre and made this transcript of what their guide to the place said. Here it is.
- Bull

Come in and take a seat. Don't look around. Keep your eyes on me. There's no telling who's watching. Did you bring it? Good. Looks like you'll get your intel after all. You can call me Cutter, Cutter Jim, and you, my idiotic friend, are looking for The Shifting Pyre, am I right? My advice? Walk away. You're messing with forces you don't understand, with people you can't handle. No? Fine then, let's begin...

What do you know about the Tarot? Not much eh? Well, out there, there are cards, Tarot cards that ain't like cards you've ever seen. They're magic and they're dangerous. Hey! I see that glint in your eye and it's not that kind of dangerous. These cards won't help you. They won't give you that edge you want. Or even worse, they will and then you'll pay for the pleasure. They're too dangerous for us, for the Big 10, for the Shadow Court, for anyone! The Shifting Pyre understands this and they'll do anything to get their hands on Tarot decks. And when they do, what do you think happens? No, they don't use them! They destroy them! Poof! Up in smoke!

The Shifting Pyre is an organization with its hands in any number of pockets. You'll find members from all over the world, from all walks of life, all of them united in their hate of the cards. Your average member ain't no thing. It's a wage slave whose husband got caught up in cardcraft and is now a throw rug. They're not a real threat. Their job is as an information ring. Many eyes make finding cards easier. If they see something, they say something to the higher ups and that's when you start seeing Dealers. Dealers are your grunts in the Shifting Pyre. Men and Women who have given up everything to hunt cards full time. If you got a card they want, then you'll find them knocking on your skull by dinner. They come in groups of 4 and they won't come asking for your card politely. You got two choices, you give up your card, or they pry your card from your dead fist. Once they have your card they'll try to destroy it on the spot. Their main method is fire. Magic fire, napalm, torches, you name it. Plus they'll burn you and your building to be safe. Now, sometimes you'll have a job that your Dealers can't handle. Arrogant High profile VIPs hanging onto a dangerous card cause they think it's cool. Idiotic shits. When that happens the Shifting Pyre likes to outsource the job to shadowrunners. They'll make it all official and give you the bare minimum information for a solid payout. Truth is that Runners usually don't know or don't care what they end up taking and the Shifting Pyre doesn't care either as long as they get the card.

Now, an organization needs strong leaders. The Shifting Pyre is no different and we got three big cats at the top of our food chain. The first is Sly Jane, a troll built like a freezer with a ice cold demeanor to match. She's the Pyre's main brawn and she oversees all the Dealers that have a mind for physical mayhem. She trains them, indoctrinates them, weeds out the weak. If you got the goods and you see Sly Jane coming, you might as well light yourself on fire. It will be less painful.

Next we have Four Eyed Sal. Sal's been a Shifting Pyre for as long as there have been cards. He's about the oldest elf I have ever seen. He's a genius in cardcraft and Tarot-lore and backs it as a gifted mage. If you need intel on a card then Sal will know it. He's the brains of the Shifting Pyre and we'd get nothing done if he wasn't around. Now, Sal's not a sadist like Jane. He's a pacifist, real dandelion eater, but he's one calculating sonuva bitch. If the equation of success needs you to die... you'll die, but not by Sal's hand.

Last we have the man himself, Joshua Fivecoats. Not a lot is known about where Joshua came from, but he is Sioux, he is a shaman and he is perhaps the most charming personality I have ever met. Joshua is a born leader with connections in every city and friends in the high and low places. His currency ain't nuyen, it's favors. I once saw him call in three Renraku Red Samurai to help take a Bastard card from a Horizon run facility in Jakarta. They did their job and bowed to him as they left. What Joshua wants, Joshua gets and what Joshua wants is cards.

The last group you'll deal with in the Shifting Pyre are the Cutters, like me. Cutters are squad leaders, inside informants, and lieutenants of the Shifting Pyre. We're like upper management. Usually you'll find one of us lurking in with a Dealer squad to make sure the job gets done. Most of us used to be Runners ourselves. But we're not in that line of work anymore. We got a cause to follow and Cutters are fanatics about the Tarot and about burning shit. You'll know a Cutter by the burns on their arms and faces. We wear them like badges of honor. But they're really shackles.

Now you won't find the Shifting Pyre in any type of HQ. We don't have a building or a clubhouse or chapter bake sales. We are as elusive as a candle flame. Try to grab us and we'll disappear but we're always ready to come back at the first spark. But if you did want to find us then try looking in Chicago, Paris and Tokyo. Those three cities seem to always have more than their share of Shifting Pyre members floating about. Don't think you'll find any of the Three there though. Those guys are constantly on the move.

Anyway, that's all I got that's worth telling. You want more info you better find them yourself. Me? Don't worry about me. After what you gave me I think I'll be fine. But this is your last warning, chummer. One ex-runner to another. You don't want to get mixed up with these people. Fine! Suit yourself. Good luck, chummer. You're gonna need it.

- I've seen a few references to this group in my research, but information is scant. References seem to be becoming more common, though—either they're growing or deliberately raising their public profile.
- Winterhawk

- I ran into a group of them on a dig in Cairo. We'd pulled a collection of ancient fortune telling cards from the tomb of the Pharaoh Adjib and they were on us before we could say bihaqq aljahim! They got the cards, and we got stranded in the desert.
- Elijah

- Nasty business these guys. They are like lice on a feral cat; Persistent, irritating and hard to get rid of.
- Lyran

- I worked a job with them last spring in Rio. They seemed alright to me. A bit of the touch of pyromania to them but they didn't seem all that dangerous. A good pack of Runners could take out a group of Dealers, not problem.
- Jimmy No

- You obviously dealt with a group without Cutters. Jimmy, when you are you going to learn that just because you don't see them as a threat, doesn't mean they aren't one. It's incredibly egocentric.
- Lyran

- Egocentric? Don't you mean insightful?
- Jimmy No

- I mean egocentric.
- Lyran

- I feel we are straying from the topic. Let's simplify shall we? Shifting Pyre: Are they a threat or an aid?
- Winterhawk

- Threat. Any militant group willing to set a bystander village on fire so they can burn some tarot cards is the definition of dangerous.
- Elijah

- One hundred percent agreed. They don't care how they get their job done. Their collateral damage is astronomical.
- Lyan

- They're a blip. Dangerous, maybe, but lasting? I don't think you have a lot to worry about. They want to destroy the cards, not use them. They're vengeance obsessed, and I will count them a 4/10 for dangerous. Plus they pay well!
- Jimmy No

- Thank you all for your input. I for one have to agree with Elijah and Lyan. These people are unchecked and dangerous. Stay safe out there.
- Winterhawk

- We will.
- Joshua5Coats

ALIGNING THE COURT

POSTED BY: OLD CROW

- I went ahead and gave Old Crow access through JackPoint since we're doing the cooperation thing, and also since he kept bellyaching about it. More accurately, since Aufheben is M.I.A. or dead, we needed an insider to stream us the goods on the neo-anarchist fronts. There is another guy we're considering as well, but since Old Crow is a known (if loud) quantity with good connections, he made the cut first. This download isn't particular to the neo-anarchists, but I think you'll agree that when the Unseelie are involved, it's close enough. Plus, all of this drek is way over my head.
- Bull

I've been keeping ears on the Seelie for a while, and since I have some allies who want this data to get around, I'm throwing it up here, especially since anything Seelie related these days also seems to be Tarot related. The fae, aj Itzel, who collected this data was hard to track down. When one of my little crows managed to get close, she bolted and dropped a magical tablet of some sort. Apparently, in the Seelie Court, these tablets work like a commlink or cyberdeck, magically sending and receiving messages, and the following were either sent or prepared to be sent to a patron within the Court. Take a look. I'm taking personal interest in where this is headed.

- Oooh! Ooh! Magical comlinks! 'Cat, can I have one?!
- Slamm-0!

- No.
- Netcat

DEAREST LADY XOC,

I have done as you requested. This information was not easy to obtain, and the truth is, although we could not afford to lose any of our small number, many of us died to gather and collect this data. I believe I am now being followed, but I have thus far been able to either completely evade or learn the identity of the pursuit. Nevertheless, I will not allow my fear or current circumstances to interfere with the tasks you assigned to me. Here is what I have gleaned, and I fear it does not bode well for our faction—or the Seelie as a whole.

QUEENS OF THE COURT

First, our càraidean in Lady Thisbe's entourage brings us ill tidings. It seems that the Queen in Exile knows far more about Queen Alachia's web of intrigue than we gave her credit for. I would dare say that she knows even more than we do, if you can believe that. The vitriol between the two former Queens has reached a fever pitch, boiling over like an unwatched kettle, much of it centering around their views of Lady Brane Deigh. While Alachia abides by no ill talk about Lady Brane whatsoever (and we have all heard the tales of how she deals with those that do so), Lady Thisbe listens intently to those same tales that continue to swirl about the sitting Queen.

- This isn't the first time Alachia's name has been brought up in connection with the magical shenanigans.
- Frosty

- Some names collect rumors and power, while other times power and rumors are drawn to certain names.
- Man-of-Many-Names

- There are some things you kids shouldn't talk about. Even in your safe spaces. Janey, you should warn them. But what do I know?
- The Laughing Man

- You don't know enough to keep sticking your nose in my business. Beat it.
- Frosty

- Boring conversation anyway.
- The Laughing Man

As you know, these range from tales of Lady Brane being fatally ill, to stories that she has taken a dwarf lover, or that she is not a fae at all, then all the way around to bits of insanity suggesting that she is the queen of the Unseelie Court or that she keeps an adult dragon chained in her bedchambers. Of course, the Lady Thisbe would never repeat or encourage these rumors. But she does listen. It did not go unnoticed by our càraidean that when Lady Thisbe compared Lady

Brane to Gloriana the Tranquil, Queen Alachia drew herself up to a frightful height, bristling fiercely, causing the Queen in Exile to recant her statement. That is something, to my knowledge, that no one has ever seen Lady Thisbe do before.

Mistress, I am afraid my friends have failed me, as have my attempts at research, but I cannot find any mention of this Gloriana the Tranquil to report on. The name itself is unfamiliar to me, and whenever I set my mind to research, I wake up in my bed, as if overcome by weariness. Please advise.

Springing from this tension between the two former queens is this: Both have begun to seek out new allies in the court. The Yellowstone Calamity brings numbers of unfashioned newcomers into our realm, and now it seems that Lady Thisbe entreats upon these unsophisticated visitors through her servant, Walks-through-Tall-Grass. These arrangements rarely end well for the new courtiers. Queen Alachia is also gathering these newcomers to her side, though she would never deign to be seen acting in a base manner. Those who have been called on to do her bidding never know who they are serving, and as often as not, they think they are working for Lady Brane or her Aes Sidhe Banrigh faction. Such is the practice of our Queen Alachia's gentle ministrations. I am told that in exchange for information, Lady Thisbe has been requesting information about, and in some cases retrieval of, certain peculiar Tarot cards. Queen Alachia has sent her servants on what seem to be much more mundane tasks, such as delivering confidential communiques to chosen members of the Court, ensuring that a particular position be well filled, or merely just strolling through the orchards near particular courtiers' manses. To what end these add up, only Alachia can say, but the fact that she has kept pace with Lady Thisbe in regards to the number of new operatives sent on these missions makes me certain they are not random.

ARCANA AWAKENED

Regarding the tarot, however, I must comment further. Recent events have caused renewed interest and excitement within the Court regarding the factions' Arcana. As you know, factions within the Court have long sought

after, and in some case have acquired, the Tarot cards associated with their faction. And as you know far better than a mere servant such as I, those factions with access to their card have gained much from the power and guidance those artifacts possess, but perhaps you may not be aware that the mortals from Earth have begun to take an interest in the Tarot as well. I can confirm that they do not have any special insight or clues that we do not possess, but our friends have told us that at least a few mortals have come into possession of the cards. In most cases, these have been from the minor arcana (as befitting the mortals' place), thus we can bide our time in concerning ourselves with their locale. Please see my forthcoming missive for all details we know regarding which cards are held by these mortals and where they can be located.

There is something else to discuss. Something we perhaps have not considered well enough, as we have been overly concerned with the Court and our place in the firmament. The mortals do not speak of the arcana as we do. They speak, the majority of times, of what they call the Sixth World Tarot, and when I have been able to view the cards these mortals possess, the power within marks them as the cards we seek. The images, though, do not match. For as long as I have been aware of the factions, I have known the Ten of Pentacles to show an aged man sitting aside an archway. Surrounded by family, ten pentacles hang in the air. And yet, when I perceived this very card in the hands of a mortal on Earth, the card showed a pathetic vagrant viewing his life through a commlink in his possession. These pictures were arranged (each just behind coins, not pentacles), and shaped into the mortals' symbol for "nuyen." Investigating this further, I tested a theory.

Once upon a time, my gracious and generous Lady Xoc, you gifted me the Page of Wands as I began my journey to serve you and our faction. I will never forget the image it bore: a young page holding a budding staff, garbed in a tunic bearing salamanders, looking to the east. Going back to my home, I retrieved the card from its secure place and beheld it. It was as I remembered. Then, I took one of my routes that led me back to the mortal realm. Once there, I beheld the Page of Wands again. And then I had my answer. The card had changed. It now shows an Amerind shaman, salamander on her shoulder, battling a fire spirit in front of a vault. Whatever magic was bound to the cards long ago caused them to change appearance and, my belief is, to reflect the world as it currently is. It appears that these images remain symbolic, but they also may bear resemblance to actual mortals, living or dead. Another startling revelation was that when I returned to the fae realms, the card retained its Earth-born appearance, and has continued to retain it in the months since. This phenomenon, though I have been unable to verify further, may account for what we thought were simply stylistic changes to tease the court's rumormongers. We thought very little when the Fool faction renamed itself the Bastard, but in light of this new information, a change in the card itself may have been the prompt for the faction to evolve. With this knowledge, we will have a steep advantage in our quest to gather the Tarot Arcana.

- That is really intriguing. The idea that these artifacts may carry a shadow of the world implies that they are tied to something more than we are used to seeing. If the manasphere is affecting theseTarot cards to reflect the past, present, and future, it could mean that our understanding of how magic relates to time is ... unfinished.
- Elijah

- Magic has always been beyond immediate comprehension, and these changes could be the start of something more.
- Orange Queen

- The prodigal queen returns.
- Puck

THE OTHER SIDE

To continue a thread I began earlier, concerning Queen Alachia: My friends encountered a somewhat troubling series of events a few months past. Plor na mBan, the Woman of Flowers, was heard speaking of Fauth-Doshgoi. She claimed, thinking she was unheard, that a former Queen of the Court conspired with a shadowy Got to keep the "Ebon Queen" there, away from someone named Gwyn. She also offered that somehow a group of mortal shadowrunners, mercenaries bearing a very passing resemblance to our càraidean, had escaped the Faerie realm with the Awakened World card. I admit little knowledge of this Gwyn, and none of an Ebon Queen, but the assertion that a Queen of the Court, even a former Queen, would covenant with a Got from the shadow is deeply disturbing. Could this Queen be Alachia? What could she possibly fear from this Ebon Queen that would cause her to make such unsavory alliance? Is this Ebon Queen yet another former Queen of the Court? Is she related to the images on the Awakened World?

The only thing I can add further is the only connection I have unearthed regarding this Gwyn is the accusation of Unseelie activity. But the document of accusal is well over 1,500 years old. Surely it is not relevant any longer. Perhaps this Gwyn is related? Either way, if the Unseelie are involved, these revelations could shake the Court to its knees. My lady, this bodes extremely ill. I beg caution in revealing these truths.

YOUR SERVANT,
AJ ITZEL

BELOVED LADY XOC,

This is the result of my attempt to compile further information on the Tarot cards themselves, as requested. This has not been without difficulty, and I am grieved to inform you that the Hermit faction is now aware of our existence. I beg mercy. While this was not directly my doing, Sacre Floot, a sister under my care, was discovered and was unwilling to suffer for her silence. As you know, the Hermit has not revealed our existence, nor have they contacted any of our sister priestesses. But I cannot fathom that they will keep our existence secret for long. I advise that we announce ourselves to Lady Brane Deigh before our existence is revealed by others.

- The idea that any power structure has entrenched factions, including covert factions, shouldn't come as a surprise.
- Thorn

SECRETS REVEALED

But not all of my tidings are ill, High Sister, or I would be a poor correspondent. Once again, your insight has proven most helpful. While there are known to be ten factions operating more or less openly and with full awareness of the Court, you have correctly surmised that there are other factions, like us, that operate in the ever-present shade cast from the Court's luminaries. Your divination has pointed us to at least two other factions that I have been able to verify. That is, they can be verified to exist, but most shamefully details remain scarce.

First, there exists a faction fashioned after Karma. I have gathered that once upon an age, they saw themselves as Judgment, but they, along with the Tarot, seem to have evolved. This faction has no nickname I am aware of, but when they meet, which is not often, they conclude their meetings with the saying, "Deep Truth honors the humble and humbles the honored. Do not be deceived." When gathered, each wears garments with an endless knot symbol, composed of right-angled, intertwined lines. If they remain true to the Arcana, as the other factions do, we can expect this faction to champion destiny, truth, judgement, exposing error and repaying it, and perhaps redemption. Unlike the other factions, the Karma faction seems to operate on a strict meritocracy, where the merit valued is service. The object of this service was unclear to our spy. Whether this faction seeks to gain positive karma by serving others or rather to mete out karma, both positive and negative, in order to further cosmic judgment is unclear. We believe there is a council of eight members sitting atop the faction and making judgements in closed session. The goals of the Karma faction remain unclear at this point, although continued observation will surely yield further insight. What I can reveal is that Satori Emeraldine is among them, as is Snard Zennicken. Both are càraidean serving Unbroken Bloo, which calls for his further investigation, although it is early yet to assume that he, too, belongs to Karma.

I wish there was more to report on the second mentioned faction, but the few revelations we have earned were quite difficult to acquire. I am now certain that the faction of Threshold is in operation. No details exist regarding their size or membership, but their aims seem to coincide with eliminating the Yellowstone Anomaly. One of our sisters observed a ritual apparently intended to close the portal. The participants, garbed in robes black on one side, white on the other, were unsuccessful and perished as a result, but on them was the Threshold card, depicting what I can only imagine is the legendary Dweller on the Threshold. Their dialogue before death revealed their belief that the Dweller finds the Anomaly distasteful, and its followers wish it collapsed. Might we expect further factions to reveal themselves? I await your guidance on these matters.

In addition to factions of Arcana, conflicting reports continue to come in regarding the Unseelie Court. Some have reported Unseelie activity in nearly every known faction of the Court, although the Death, Hanged Man, Bastard, Comet, and Hermit factions continue as lead candidates for strong Unseelie involvement. More specific tales however, include conflicting details. For example, a certain leshii claims that he was kidnapped and brought before the Unseelie, a twisted, dark mirror version of the Seelie Court, presided over by a Queen every bit as wicked and dark as Lady Brane is decent and bright. He claims he was questioned and tortured, but managed to escape. Yet other claims suggest the Unseelie are not organized at all, least of all in the same way the Seelie Court is, and that they exist to damage power structures. I have even heard rumor that Unseelie helped foster revolution in Tír Tairngire, although I admit to not having been as attentive to Earth-bound politics fifteen years ago as I am now. One other report claims that the Unseelie have somehow managed to claim possession the Fairy Flag. How disastrous for those fae bound to it! I can neither confirm nor deny these particular rumors, and my attempts to do so cause me to wonder whether the Unseelie are nothing but collective figments of courtier imagination, but the abundance of reports must mean otherwise. Still, these rumors cannot all be true at once.

- From my experience, if the evidence all points to the existence of a conspiracy, the conspiracy exists. It's when there isn't evidence of a conspiracy that you can start jumping at shadows.
- Thorn

- Sometimes those shadows are just that.
- Fianchetto

Moving forward, my advice is to begin searching in earnest for all available cards depicting Arcana. I believe

that these cards will allow us to not only identify hidden factions, but also place our faction in a place of primacy for negotiations with the other factions. It is a strain to imagine what a faction wouldn't do in order to hold their namesake card.

My mission continues, fairest One.

IN CONSTANT SERVICE,
AJ ITZEL

PERSPICACIOUS LADY XOC,

The intervening time between my last correspondence and this one have brought further insight into the Arcana, just as you have predicted. This time, what we have learned centers on the history of the Tarot itself. May I congratulate you on your precisely executed negotiation with Lady Brane Deigh. Sister Verda was adept as ever. The word-smithing displayed when she revealed our existence, along with our efforts in bringing Threshold to her attention, seems to have placed our faction well within her graces. Further, allowing the Queen to choose the timing of our reveal to the Court allowed the Queen to feel as if she carried a secret, which is worth so much more than gold in the Court, as you know. We shall have to use our knowledge of the Karma faction to gain a similar advantage. Although experience whispers that you already have these plans.

ARCANE HISTORY

Now, as for the reason I write, much has been learned of the cards that our factions hold dear. I am saddened to tell you that this will likely be my last letter. Please do not think ill of me, and do forbid it that anyone weep for me, but I have made a covenant that shall claim my life upon a fortnight. I approached Walks-through-Tall-Grass to gain audience with Lady Thisbe, and an audience I had. I sought information regarding the Arcana, and my sources led me to faith in the Queen-in-Exile's wisdom. I was warned there would be a harsh price to pay, but I was bound to redeem the shame of Sacre Floot, who served under me and revealed us to the Hermit faction. Ever has the lost duty of the charge been laid at the feet of the master. The price for the knowledge gained is fatal, and I am setting my affairs in order while I still can. Search not for me, nor attempt rescue. Lady Thisbe is not what she appears, and I am made afraid for those I love. It is my hope that the following was worth a life.

It seems that the cards so coveted by our factions, and now outsiders, are not cards at all. According to the Lady, the Arcana is a unified artifact from another age, the result of powerful magic not seen in even a fae's long life. I was shown visions of the Tarot in other forms, from long ago: clay and gold tablets, scrolls, and engravings on skin. These items, when brought together, hold terrible power, the full extent of which even the Lady could—or would—not say. But as you know, rumor suggests these items resist this union and often act with a will to separate themselves from each other.

To what end the Arcana was created remains unknown, but the threads of destiny are bound to it. And I am beginning to doubt that the destiny described by the cards belongs to the fae. As I wrote in my previous letter, the cards change only when on the mortal plane; they remain static on ours. Since our last correspondence, I have seen further evidence of this. Startlingly, more than a few of the cards have transformed into forms resembling hologram devices, such as the mortals use. They did not move exclusively to this state, but the change lends weight to my guess that both the immediate and global contexts affect each card.

To further complicate things, I have witnessed more than one card bearing the identical image, and both were infused with magic. I have yet to see these lesser copies transform, but the fact that they bear even a fraction of the magic born in the "true" cards is startling. Perhaps more startling, we are aware of no reliable means of distinguishing true arcana from lesser copies. Our eyes are not seeing the truth as well as we could—which, it seems, has been the case for decades, or even eons.

FACTIONS AND THE ARCANA

In many ways, the following confirms what we had already suspected, and what is also true of our sisters. Each faction has, by my count, three primary reasons for seeking cards from the Tarot. First, if a faction is in possession of its own card, this immediately establishes legitimacy within the Court. I do not believe it is necessary to recount the tale of how the two Tower factions tore themselves apart, each claiming to be the "true" faction. Holding the Arcana makes these squabbles moot.

Second, the power that comes from each card is, by any account, so great as to not be easily measured. In the hands of those with understanding of their own card, as presumably each faction is, these artifacts can grant many boons, usually relevant to the symbolism of the images presented on them. Further, use of these cards for prophecy, in rituals, and as imperishable and terrible reagents has been reported.

- I can't speak directly to these Seelie Factions, but the corps are collecting cards for similar reasons. Renraku is being discreet about it, but the runners they are hiring for jobs in the Faerie plane are getting briefed on the cards and what to do if they happen across any.
- Mr. Pink

Finally, there are those who seek to gather together the cards, or as many as possible, for their own purposes. As of yet, I have been unable to find any writings or witness regarding what might be possible if many or all of the cards were brought together, although after coming this far and seeing what I have, I have an altogether unsettled humor about the result.

- The author uses "humor" here and there is a possible second level of meaning. A hermetic humor, based on the classical four humors, could show a distinct shift in his aura. I wish I could have assensed him before and after to confirm my suspicions.
- Elijah

COURT POLITICS

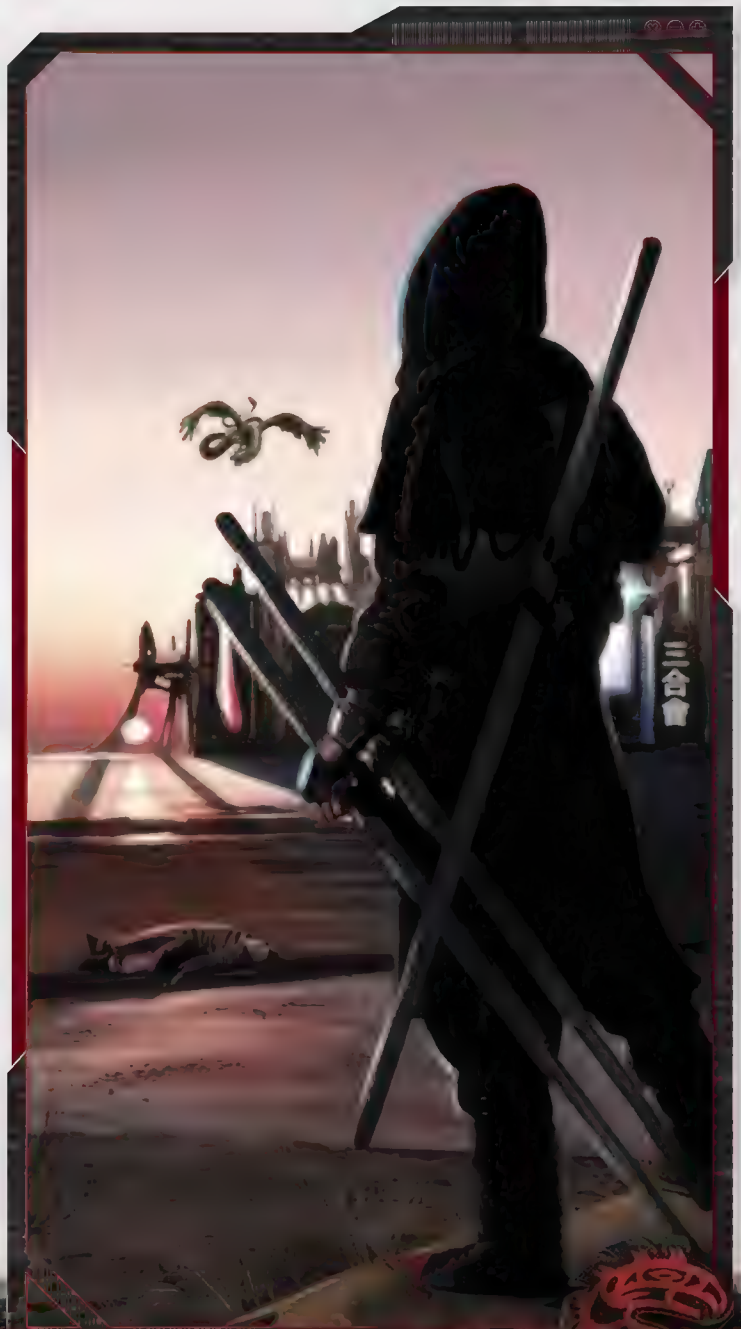
I have not given much attention to the Minor Arcana, but by way of parting, I have the following concerning them and members of the Court.

- One of the Queen's personal càraidean, Foghara-il ke'Coille, claims to have misplaced the Queen of Batons card and has promised an escort to Elderroot Grove to anyone returning it.
- The Royal Executioner, Donal Viltharion, has made rather blunderous inquiries about a mortal restaurant, the Taco Temple. He claims to be fascinated by it and wishes to partake of its cuisine, offering a frankly enormous sum to anyone bringing him any card that bears its name. And he says he will pay extra for samples of its food.
- The wife of Danny Dankwallow, owner of Dankwallow Moonberry Farm, has been missing for some time. Recently, Danny has been raving in certain court circles, showing an image of the Four of Blades (though not the card itself), which depicts his wife trapped in some laboratory. He fears it is blackmail designed to stop him from producing his famous moonberries. Thus far, no one is taking him seriously, but Danny is getting desperate for help and may be willing to barter heavily for aid.
- Through discreet channels, Niall O'Connor has made it known that he would be "blessed" to gain information regarding the Three of Batons card.

And now, my dearest, and most revered Sister, I write my last. I entreat you to look after aj Yatzil. She will make an excellent replacement for my services if given opportunity. I hope these things have redeemed myself in your sight, although I fear my work has brought as many questions as answers. I remain, even in death, your servant, most High Priestess.

HUNKUL,
AJ ITZEL

- Looks like the writer's impending doom caused her to get sloppy. Up until this point, my agent (one of the Arcane Three) had a hard time pinning aj Itzel down. He was told not to engage, just to follow and observe, but this time, once she saw her tail, she bolted and dropped the tablet. I know I can't be the only one concerned that high-profile mortals and even shadowrunners are showing up on mythical arcana artifacts wanted by Seelie courtiers. The fae have been sticking their noses into mortal business too much already. It was bad enough when it was just the Tírs, but now with a stable path to the Court, these elitist fraggers are going to be insufferable.
- Old Crow



USING THEMES AND MOTIFS

POSTED BY: MAN-OF-MANY-NAMES

There are powers at work within this deck that no one should touch lightly. This arcane collection hides within it an infinite collection of powers and foils. The slightest error can make a boon a bane, with the reason for getting one or the other effect shrouded in the mystery of the Tarot's images.

I advise against the use of these arcane artifacts with every gram of my being, but since I know few will listen, I shall instead provide some clues to the mysteries of those mistakes we have already witnessed and advice for those seeking power in the cards.

CLUES

If something has gone terribly wrong, or if you were lucky and they only went slightly awry, you need to start your search for solutions and answers by looking at the cards involved and those that were not. It's a challenge equal to the classic needle in a haystack or more accurately, an arrangement of needles in a collection of haystacks.

The most common problem is a missing card from the collection. Each card possesses power on their own. Yet most are used in conjunction with others, and you need the proper set to realize the full powers. If a card is missing for what you desire, the cards will make the effect as they will; it may not be anything close to what you desire, or positive in any way. Experiment (carefully). Look to the cards on hand to see what combination or collection of images may have activated. And from what I have heard, these side effects rarely function at their full potential. One may not have all the cards for an effect, and while you are in the process of collecting the others, those that are present may activate out of spite. Yes, I meant what I said. I firmly believe there is a consciousness to these cards.

Second, consider the entirety of the card. An overlooked detail or missed image may deliver more changes than you are prepared to face. In the quest for power, it becomes to easy to focus on a single aspect of the images; other details are missed. The saying "the devil is in the details" may well have originated with an earlier iteration of this deck. Be sure to look at the other parts of the images and seek hidden and symbolic meanings that may link the cards, including details beyond the image and onto the border, or even the title.

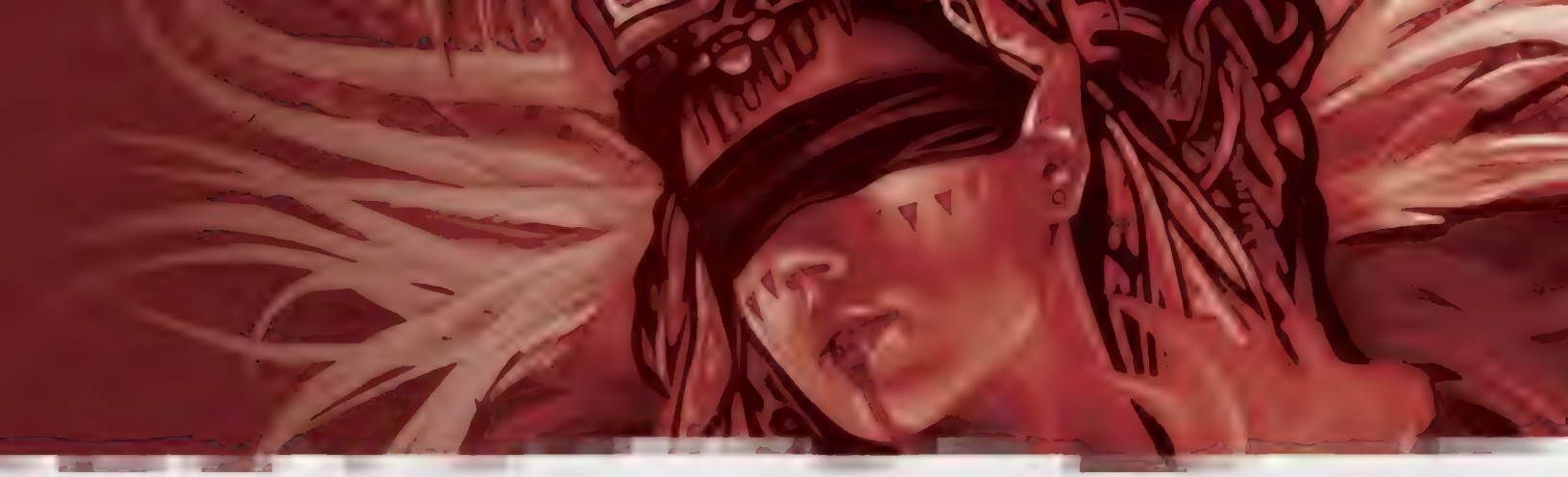
A big problem with many of those attempting to gain power from the Tarot is their lack of understanding of its nature and functionality. Very little is literal within the Tarot, and many people have read the metaphor of the card the wrong way or missed hidden metaphors in the collection of symbols. If something has gone wrong, talk about the imagery on a public forum and look at all the posts and replies. People see things in very different ways, and perceptions shape magic. These discussions could very well alter how the cards function.

Last, but most likely one of the biggest mistakes, is the arrangement of the cards in the wrong order, angle, or orientation during a ritual. The direction of a Tarot card changes the meaning. Take ...404..., for instance. Upright, it refers to transformation and change, while inverted it refers to a break in the cycle where something that should change remains static. Neither literally means death, but there is a vast difference between the two orientations. An error in a ritual placement could change everything.

ADVICE

Beyond the advice against dabbling with such powerful forces, the greatest advice I can offer is constant study and research. These cards carry powers that no one understands. We don't know where they originated or who (or what) brought them into being. We don't know everything they can do. I was not being hyperbolous when I said the power in these cards is infinite. They combine as a tarot deck, they combine by overall images, they combine by individual images, they work together in both literal and metaphorical interpretations, and they know each other.

The cards of the deck are powerful individually, but they were not created as individual entities. They were created to work together, and they were created together before spreading from one end of the metaplanes to the other and all over the world. They are interconnected, no matter how far apart they may have been when



discovered (or when they emerged, depending on the terminology you prefer).

So my advice is to learn all you can about the card you hold and the cards others have held or seen. Seek out the dark corners of MagickNet where those exposed have pooled knowledge of the cards. While not all can be taken as chip truth, there are images, conversations about known connections or failed connections, and a growing list of aspects for all of the sub-images. The sub-images, those little details that seem to appear across several cards, seem to be the seat of significant power.

And also possibly pure destructive potential. Mistakes with great power yield great troubles.

Study the images. Look closely at the details. Read into the metaphors. Look at every aspect of the card through a kaleidoscope of options. A dog is not just a dog. The type and breed of dog matters. The demeanor matters. A dog means loyalty, companionship, protection, control, and submission, just to name a few things. And, as in all tarot, the dog could be inverted, meaning betrayal, loss, destruction, release, and dominance with a simple flip of the card.

WANDERING FOOL

Those who are dedicated to the path of pursuing and using the Tarot should be aware of one strange motif that peers in through the edges of the Sixth World Tarot. It is not an individual card, but rather a repeated type of image that shows up in and around multiple Tarot cards. Wandering Fools can be seen in the background, in the margins, around the edges of reality waiting to drop in and lend a guiding hand. They may be in the background of one card or walking through the intricate patterns on the back of another. The Wandering Fool is a guide and guardian of those who perform readings using the Sixth World Tarot, helping to restore the balance brought about by the misuse of a card or leading true seekers of the cards on a path to find the answers they need. If you need to know about a card or are in trouble because of an image on a card (or the efforts of others to gather them), then try to find a Wandering Fool. They will be able to help, but be warned—they only truly help the worthy. And their definitions of "worthy" may be idiosyncratic.

The powers behind the Wandering Fool, including the question of whether or not it is one person or an organization has yet to be determined as they can be depicted in many ways. The Wandering Fool can be male, female, human or metahuman, Asian or African, poor or rich, and anything else, but they will always have the following three characteristics:

THE COAT

A Wandering Fool will always be wearing a coat of motley colors.

THE BAG

A Wandering Fool will always have a brown leather case of some kind.

THE EYES

A Wandering Fool will always have light pink or red eyes.

There are even reports that a Wandering Fool that one runner will encounter will not have the same demeanor as one that another runs into. Yet, they seem to fall into one of three categories or a mixture of them:

THE IRON

Often when a card exerts itself in a physical manifestation, and also in a harmful fashion, a Wandering Fool will arrive that is built to take it head on. The Iron Wandering Fool is brash, protective, and blunt to one it believes to be worthy.

THE COPPER

When you need lore, information, or have a card whose interpretations follow obscure rules, a Wandering Fool will arrive that can outthink it. The Copper Wandering Fool is kind, if haughty, with boundless knowledge and experience to share with those they claim worthy.

THE GOLD

When a card produces a need for some kind of bargaining, a Wandering Fool capable of negotiating can ar-

Lung
staurant
By "Treasure in the Trunk"

rive. These Gold Wandering Fools have the quick wit and charm to get people out of trouble, maybe even calming the card in the process. They are a bit rakish, sympathetic and tend to meddle with the best intentions.

When seeking a Wandering Fool, do not be disappointed if you find the task difficult. The Wandering Fool is a being or beings that arrive precisely when they mean to and often at the most opportune time. Why this is their modus operandi is yet to be discovered, but if you are in trouble and can prove your worth, a Wandering Fool might be there to help.

How do you prove your worth? Well, often that is in the eye of the beholder, but maybe for openers try not to be a scumbag. That's at least a good first step.

Possible sightings of Wandering Fools in the Sixth World Tarot include:

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

While it's true that the looking face is more in the forefront than Wandering Fools tend to be, the red eyes cannot be disputed (though how much of that is due to the tint of the screens on which he appears is open for debate).

THE RIDE

The spangled pants and mischievous smile on the central figure of this card are enough to convince some observers that she is a form of Wandering Fool.

SIX OF BATONS

The orange-bearded figure has a camouflage jacket instead of a motley, no visible leather case, and his eyes are covered, but the lenses of his glasses are orange, and many think he gives off a strong Wandering Fool vibe.

SIX OF BLADES

The small girl in the brightly colored jacket sitting under a table is identified by many as a Wandering Fool. This is accentuated by the fact that the woman near her has a leather bag on her chair with her. The fact that two sixes are involved in the hunt for Wandering Fools strikes some observers as significant.

'RULES' FOR USING THE TAROT

We place the word rules in quotes because often this is more about creativity and adaptability than strictly defined rules. This is one of those things gamemasters get to play with as much as they want. We have a few guidelines to help you make the most of the material presented in this book and give some ideas for jumping-off points for how the cards interact.

First off, every symbol has power. Using the cards for the powers within each symbol is like a giant game of Memory, but you aren't limited to pairs and you need them all to activate the power you seek. If something is missing then the cards do one of two things: 1. Nothing at all. Count your lucky stars and go home; 2. The cards seek use what is there, and a result different from what the players expected emerges. The latter option is where the fun comes in for the gamemaster. They get to enact some other power or event and send their players on some crazy adventure because of the effect of the cards. This also means that mysteries can be created by these kinds of accidents, and runners can be hired to solve them, stop someone from figuring out what happened, protect the cards while someone else tries to figure out what happened, steal the cards before someone has time to investigate, or get dragged in alongside someone (such as a contact or family member) who has been affected by the cards. The possibilities are endless, as the mysterious and magical nature of the cards allows for just about any effect or plot twist the gamemaster may want to introduce.

The cards interact in a mercurial fashion. The same cards could have a different effect when used in conjunction with a different ritual or activation event. This means that you make the rules for the deck in your iteration of the Sixth World. The short story anthology Drawing Destiny, this book (see, for example, the Codes and Puzzles chapter, p. 78), and future works will create canon effects for certain cards, but that does not lock that effect in place for you. If you see a different interpretation and want to change how a card works, it's your world. Play in it! Get creative! The cards are richly layered with symbols, detailed imagery, subtle clues, puzzles, and more. They add up to a myriad of details that can power card combinations, and every detail counts. While the warrior woman is the centerpiece of the Two of Swords, details like the closed eyes, rays of light, the swords, the shadows, the background, the blood, the color blue, the braid, the tattoos, the armor, the hair, or whatever jumps out at you are what can be used to make a story, an adventure, or a secret power held within the card.

ITEMS AND OBJECTS

- Continuing our look at recurring images on the cards, here's a transcript of a presentation given by a guy named Hansu Mitoritsu, a fairly high-ranked diviner with Mitsuhama and a guy who knows the basic tarot symbology really well. His audience for this was a collection of MCT executives. The presentation was intended as a briefing and warning on the Tarot, but I think they all just took it as clues on how to use the cards for their benefit. MCT is sitting pretty at the top, but their executives are diving into a lot of dangerous gambles with the Tarot. I know of at least two junior execs who have disappeared into the metaplanes thanks to messing with the deck.

  Comment away, but keep it constructive. Speculation, or lessons on cultural meanings, isn't needed here. We need solid data to use on the streets. This tarot is popping up all over the place, and the fact that mundanes can get involved is not helping matters.
- Glitch

RECORDED 18-08-2078

38TH FLOOR, MCT CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, KYOTO, JAPANESE IMPERIAL STATE

I have seen this Tarot of the Sixth World, and I am afraid. While my eyes have not seen them, my gifts of divination are beyond reproach. Augury is the only arcane gift I have; it is all I have focused on. The permission I received to present to this committee should be the end of the credentials I need to present.

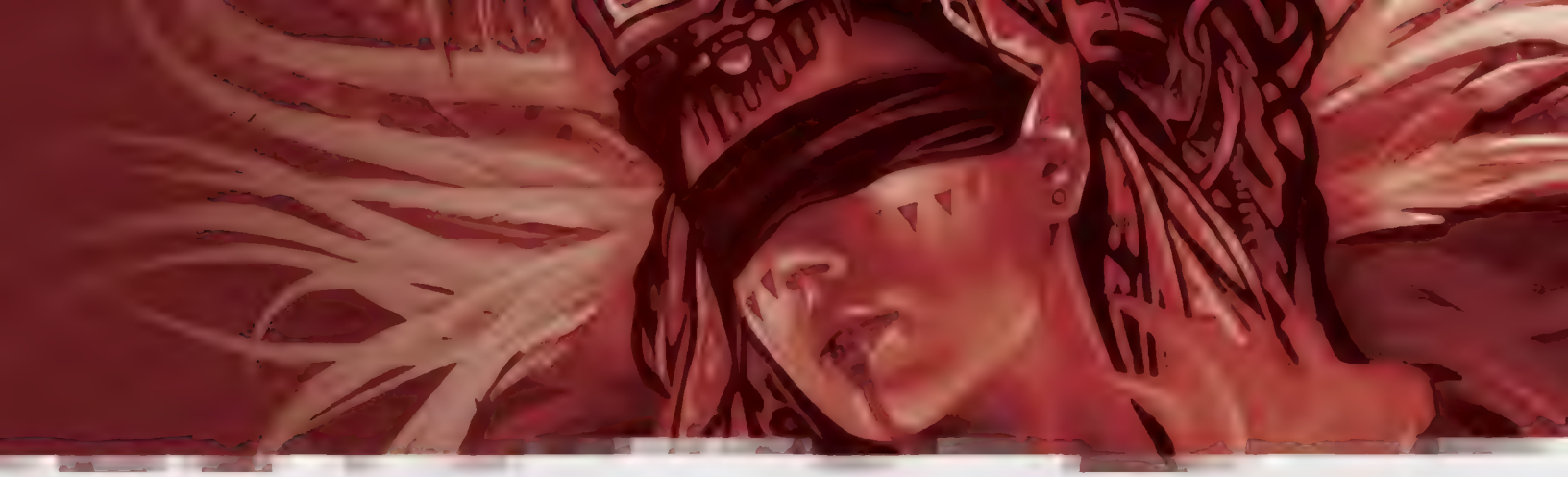
I have been brought here to speak on the imagery of the Tarot. Not just the literal figures as seen by the eyes of those who have hunted these cards down, but the deeper meanings, the hidden messages and the connections they may or may not have to our world or the worlds connected to ours. Beyond that massive scope of connection, there are other trials to face in regards to this new arcane power. Among the greatest is the trouble with divination. It is not always literal, and as such the images upon these cards may not be what some believe. Their form is also troubling, as traditional tarot readings are based on order and placement; with the Sixth World Tarot, too often people divorce images from their context, focusing instead on the pictures themselves and the powers they might provide.

Let me start where most do, with the images themselves and the items and objects depicted upon the cards. There are many images: I could not possibly discuss them all, but I have a list created for this occasion that should provide enough insight to advance your understanding.

The attention of the superficial gaze tends to fall upon the central character of the card, and while I find them fascinating (especially when a single figure appears across several cards), I often drift toward the peripheral details, both minor and major. Let us first focus on the animals depicted across the cards, since animals have long been associated with specific characteristics and concepts. It is no different with this Tarot, but we cannot forget that the rules of tarot readings must be adhered to, which means that every reading has an inverse.

Take the many images of dogs found across the cards. From the snarling mutts battling outside The Dark Side on The Shadows card to the stoic protector with the Egyptian motif who stands guard upon the Queen of Coins, hounds are depicted on no less than seven cards—more if you move into the realm of metaphor and ponder the concept of servile metahumans serving as the hounds of their masters. The primary meaning for each canine card, based on the posture and position of the hound, is one of protection and service. Loyalty is one of the most common attributes assigned to canines, and these cards present a future vision of loyalty.

Unless they are read in the inverse. Then these hounds are upside down, and betrayal is in the future. This theme is broken in at least two places. The hounds that fight each other on The Shadows speak of battling loyalists. Two forces loyal to the same master but at odds with one another. An executive seeking power from this card would need to watch out for dissension among his most trusted servants. The hound falling on The Bastard card is a loyal companion that must be sacrificed. Invert these past two, and we find loyalists fighting not for the betterment of their master but for his betrayal. The loyal spaniel cast out by The Bastard is, in inverse, the force that rises underfoot to betray the plans of the unwanted.



The modern twist upon the dog speaks of the dogs of war, forces intended to be unleashed upon an enemy. Within the reading of the cards is a need to unbridle forces or release inhibitions. Or in the inverse, to rein in forces and keep them in line.

Similar to the dog imagery, we have many other animals present on the cards that appear as companions or forces within the sphere of control of the primary character of the card. Cats in many forms appear to be companions. This is a direct contradiction to the modern view of the cat as a creature of independence and wild cats as creatures of power. The strength of the lion under the sway of a summoner speaks of the ability to control a powerful force. The leopard and techno-leopard pulling the chariot symbolize the combined efforts needed between the natural and technological world to advance plans. In inverse, they are obstacles standing against progress that must be overcome.

From our Sixth World perspective, we can see these cats representing individuals within our companies who are extremely independent and yet always loyal to the place that provides them a home. When seeking a tale of guidance within the cards or utilizing them through a ritual to draw on a small sampling of their power, know that those independent forces will be pulled into one's sphere of influence.

Birds of many varieties are spread across the cards, and each portrays a different aspect of life. The owl is wisdom or foresight; its inverse is a failure to heed that wisdom, or a false sense of wisdom.

The hawk is a hunter. It prowls the skies and seeks to strike its prey when least expected. The cards desire quick and decisive action when the hawk is present. When the hawk is inverted, it is a warning that others may be prepared to strike against you soon.

The tropical bird appears in two places, both connected to Meso-American imagery. We associate that style with Aztechnology, and those birds represent the touch of that region on the tale the cards are trying to warn of or the powers the ritual is trying to touch upon. Aztechnology has a strong connection, whether intentional or inadvertent, to this deck. The tropical bird is also a showman, a flourish of color intended to impress, though both representatives sit in calm repose within their images. Seek the use of what the streets call a face, or in corporate parlance a social asset, when involved in machinations tied to this card. Preferably one who is a showman or flamboyant in their style. In the inverse, the tropical bird is a call for stealth and subterfuge, a command to stifle flamboyance and be discreet.

The dove, a symbol of peace, appears in the deck in contrast to its nature. Its claws are bloodied, wings open, as it kills another of its kind. This contradiction does not negate the peace symbolized by the dove but rather exemplifies the lengths needed to reach that peace. It will not be simple; it will require blood, likely the blood of someone close. For rituals this means a sacrifice, but not a sacrifice of life. Rather, it needs a sacrifice of one's nature. In inverse, this dove means trouble. The peace that it represents is preparing to be shattered in a bloody fashion. One bird is not a bird at all but a representation of a bird, the paper crane.

A single crane sits upon the floor of a troubling scene, while a second rests on the leg of child. That child constructs a third. It shows a long road to healing ahead and the innocence of the forces needed for that healing. As you well know, the paper crane is a symbol of healing, but that is only when there are large numbers of them. The single crane prophesizes a great need for healing, or a rift that is about to rise. In inverse, this crane will be the start of healing, or it will be connected to the force that will start the healing.

Rarely noticed by many is the hummingbird, a bird related to the mythos of the Western hemisphere. Several Native American cultures, both in the north and south sections of the continent, have tales of the hummingbird. The Tarot uses the hummingbird as a messenger or courier, specifically in terms of currency or valuable data. This coincides with the view of the hummingbird as a pollinator, with data as the pollen that it carries from source to source. This symbol brings a touch of technology in the mystical realm of the Tarot.

The final bird (or birds, really) to speak of are on the Ace of Cups. This pair is not about the birds themselves but about the colors. The black-and-white bird survives, while the colored bird has perished on the thorns. The card tells a tale to keep to the black and white, maintaining plain simplicity and avoiding the "color" or com-

plications in operations. Inverted, we read it as a sign of sacrifice. The color and complications of life or events are sacrificed before the simplicity of black and white. What makes the Ace of Cups stand out is the prominence of the birds in the image. While the Cup sits in the background, the birds push to the forefront.

We see several fish throughout the deck, and each represents something different in a prophetic sense. The summoned fish is a sign of guidance and wisdom. This shows an opportunity to learn, or a need to learn when in inverse. The inverted summoned fish is a quest to seek knowledge and wisdom. The angler fish, though quite cartoonish in nature, is a light in the darkness and, as it appears on the Matrix card, it represents this Tarot's version of the Magician. It refers to a revelation from that source, quite possibly in the form of technomancy or what is referred to as the Resonance Realms and the Deep Resonance. The last is likely a direct reference, as the angler depicted is a deep-sea angler, which lives in the deepest reaches of the oceans. When inverted it acts much like the other fish, as a warning. In this case, it warns of threats from the Matrix or technomancers.

Closely connected to the angler are the eels. These are defenses, but not always defenses intended for the angler or other entities emerging from the Matrix. This Tarot is complex in the way that cards relate to each other, and some images are not even intended for their card specifically. The paired eels are paired defenders, both slick and deadly. They are not seen until it is too late, and in a reading this card offers a chance to be ready for this unseen obstacle. When inverted, the eels are a need for defense that is unseen and paired. An executive that has drawn from the power of this card should be ready with at least a pair of bodyguards, both who operate from the crowd rather than with the obvious uniform of a dark suit and sunglasses.

The Queen of Coins also contains a pair of white arowana. These fish are symbols of wealth, and this presentation, much like many of the presentations within the Coins suit, demonstrate opulence by having not one, but two of the fish. As a separate aspect, the arowana are the prospect of wealth, and in their inverse they are a threat to wealth, but only in reference to followers of feng shui. When operating in opposition to forces that use this Chinese tradition, these meanings are reversed. As an interesting aside, the arowana is also known as the dragon fish, and there are many who believe this card can be part of draconic rituals.

The snake is an often-misunderstood symbol, as its mystical nature has been subsumed to its religious overtone in many cultures. Where in Eurocentric myths, the snake was a sign of wisdom and healing through secretive techniques, it is now seen as a betrayer and corruptor due to biblical influence. The snake here is another animal presented in its Meso-American aspect. The snake is a symbol of rebirth in its standard form, while inverted it takes on the nature of dark whispers, a dark

twin, or a constrictive or venomous force. Again, potentially related to Aztechnology or an affiliate.

- Word was that Villiers was looking for this one but wasn't able to find it in time. He wanted to use the rebirth aspect along with the phoenix imagery on one of the others to help boost his next rise to power.
- Mihoshi Oni

- It's funny you mention Villiers. Whether it's because he was hunting it down or because of the rebirth aspect of the card that he represents so well, he became intricately involved in an operation I was involved in connected to this card. Not in its acquisition, but in efforts toward its activation.
- Sticks

The pig, specifically its slaughtered nature, piqued my curiosity far more than I would have originally expected. The imagery, brutal and rough, spoke powerfully to my conscious mind in terms of slaughter for survival, such as food for the agricultural society, but the divination of the slaughtered pig is far more metaphorical. The pig is the sign of gluttony and excess and the slaughtered pig is the conflict to overcome and overthrow that power. Though not by force, as one might expect, but through keen wit and a sharp mind when presented with the Page of Blades, as represented by the blades within the image; or by ingenuity when presented as part of the Five of Batons.

On the wall behind the King of Blades sits the image of a butterfly, a rather peaceful image for such a violent card. But the king sits, calm and contemplative. One logical conclusion is that the butterfly represents the so-called "Butterfly Effect" of the actions one commits. This card is a warning that planning and forethought are necessary for the violence to come. Inverted, the card still offers a warning, but this time it warns that the actions of another will come to affect the actions or persons at hand. The color also mattered in my divinations, as the purple represents the blending of sorrow (blue) and anger (red) in the the errant actions. Inversion of the card had no effect on the color aspect, just on who receives them. It is sorrow and anger for all who touch its power.

A lizard appears on the Three of Coins. Its meaning is based on its position above the gathered trio, watching over them. This creature warns of an over-watching lizard—in some interpretations, a dragon in tiny form. This is a sneaky symbol—the common appearance keeps it non-focal, while any image of an actual dragon, no matter how small, would become a focus of the card. This is a metaphor for the warning. The dragon is watching but not prominent in events. In the inverse, the lizard watches the events, though not necessarily the persons involved. While I am sure all here are aware that when dragons are involved, one should assume they have a wide body of knowledge about all others involved in the affair, this is a sign. Whether it is because they are anonymous or insignificant, some people have not been noticed by the dragon. The flaming salamander, while secondary to the sasquatch on the King of Batons, is a card of change and cleansing. The presence means decisive action with no holding back.

I questioned whether to include the bone horse within this section but found its meanings to fit well within and among the other animals. The horse is a beast of labor, honored for its strength, speed, and even companionship. The bone horse tells of the overworked faithful. In standard facing it warns of a workforce or loyal servant that is being worked to the "bone." This metaphor speaks not of literal death but instead of the death of the loyalty or work that is being provided. When inverted, it takes on a whole different meaning and frame of reference. The inverted bone horse—in this case the inverted The Eclipse—becomes a portent of death or troubling times ahead. It reflects the Biblical "pale horse" without specifically declaring how death plays a part, as at times it can be either the individual that shall become death or that death will follow them.

Before we take our first break, I have one last animal to talk about, which I keep separate because it has so many derivative meanings based on the cards associated with it. The image of the rat and the tagged rat vary in their meanings based on other cards in their presence. It is a complex relationship among the cards that I have not been able to fully investigate in the time prior to this meeting, but I have developed several understandings that I can pass along to this esteemed audience.

The tagged rat sits at the feet of the blue-braided girl on the Five of Coins. The chaos of the scene behind offers stark contrast to the fearful appearance of the girl clutching her bear. The rat here is simply a known aspect of the city. In fact, in most meanings and connections, this rat is a guide or a force of revelation. A piece of the city's underworld that has been tagged and returned to the wild. This tagged rat is an informant, marked by the city but still crawling through the sewers and streets searching for scraps. The clue to the source of control is provided by the presence of other cards. Here are some other cards it may be combined with and what they can mean: the Three of Blades means the strings lead to Aztechnology, the Six of Blades reveals the Yakuza or our own MCT, the Knight of Batons means a governmental or law-enforcement agency holds the leash, The Bastard reveals a connection to mystical forces, The Higher Power means the rat owes allegiance to the Corporate Court, The Dragon links to Lofwyr and Saeder-Krupp, the Two of Cups connects to the neo-anarchists, the King of Cups points to the Triads or Wuxing, the Five of Coins to a benevolent benefactor, while the Ten of Blades shows an allegiance to self, a rat in it for their own elevation.

Inverted, this card actually speaks of a need for intelligence against these many powerful forces; once again, the specific commections would be based on other

cards. I have recommended in a separate document that control of the Six of Blades be a priority for Unit 13 in order to limit our exposure.

The untagged rats on the Ten of Blades is a sign of lethal betrayal. The connections don't work the same to reveal the force behind the rat, as it is the betrayal itself that is the focus of the card's energy, not the reasons why. The card is a warning on impending betrayal when read upright and a signal of the need for betrayal when inverted.

When a rat appears and is followed or connected with the Queen of Coins, it represents the trappings of modern society and riches. While the moving force may be wealthy, they are a prisoner of their wealth, rather than being in control of it. As seen from a personal reading, this could be a sign that change is needed, while a reading against another force might mean a need for a rescue from those trappings.

In the presence of the Ten of Cups, the rat reveals a mystery with its connection to the blinded woman. This can mean a mystery one is intended to solve or one with which an individual has found themselves enmeshed. The cards will reveal more truths based on the strings of imagery they produce. If an individual is neither involved in a mystery or looking to solve one, the card will influence the world around them to provide a mystery. The scope of the power within the cards is astonishing at times.

Last in my knowledge here is the connection with the Four of Blades—the experiment on the horizon. This is not a literal experiment but a series of tests and trials to demonstrate the mettle of an individual or group, depending on the use of the card. We have learned that the cards can be used within a ritual, and we've also discovered that arcane potential is not necessary for a connection to the cards. This means that a large number of individuals can be dragged into the events of this card combination.

This now brings us to the end of the first presentation. After the break we will move on to more symbolism and the nature of the effects caused by these symbols.

Welcome back, I am glad to see all have returned—and we seem to have gained a few additional faces. All can gain value from this knowledge. For this second half, we will talk more about the symbols located across several cards and the foresight they hold.

Across many cards we see what I refer to as "the case." This is a black box with golden stars across it. Others have told me it resembles an ammo box. The forces within the images are often clutching, battling, or rejoicing over the box, and each separate repose provides a different meaning for what that symbol means on the card. As a constant, the case is a desire. No matter the images it is surrounded with or the way in which it is clutched or sits, it represents some desired object or outcome. The nature of this desire differs by the individual, but it is, in all cases, not overt. This is not a coveted treasure; rather it is a deep desire that is kept hidden in the subconscious.

Take the Six of Coins, for example. There is a girl standing on the box, using it to make herself taller, and yet she is crouched. The imagery is spot-on for the desire to reach to new heights being stifled by the fear of over-reaching. The acquisition of one's desire may open the door, but fears must be overcome for an individual to walk through.

The Nine of Coins expresses a need for acquisition, as the girl in the image appears to be smiling now that she has gained this object of desire. As all metaphors go, this isn't about the object but about the acquisition and understanding of the object. The foretelling speaks of gaining a desired object with this card.

Then you have the Two of Cups, where a pair sit over the box with a foot on it and clink glasses as if rejoicing over its acquisition while a captive escapes in the background. The desire is achieved and realized, but there is more that will come from this in the form of loose ends. It acts as a warning.

Last, we look at the Knight of Batons, where the case is taken from the man being attacked by the police. This is a threat to the desire, a chance at its loss if one does not choose carefully. The desire may not be acquired, yet this card signals a threat to that acquisition, or if the desire has been gained, a risk of loss. I have also seen it as a warning that a desire one might believe they have achieved is not as fully realized as might be hoped.

A last point on the case is that it always requires travel. Even if the desire is within oneself or already possessed, the powers behind the cards demand movement. This doesn't always mean international or long distance; sometimes it is as simple as moving a few blocks, but other times it requires journeys between metaplanes. Those occasions are when one knows the cards are instituting a stringent test of ability and desire.

- That explains a few things. A chummer was talking about a job where Mr. Johnson needed a security detail while another team performed a ritual of some kind. The ritual was running in the back of a big-rig trailer rolling across NAN lands. He said he caught a glimpse of what looked like Tarot cards in the ritual space when all hell broke loose inside the trailer. Something definitely didn't go as planned.
- Sounder

The hand or handprint, in several forms, appears throughout the Tarot. The message intended varies by the card but tends to fall in one of three categories: guidance, warning, or a haunted past returning. Each card that bears the hand—whether white, bloody, or blended with the scenery—offers some kind of glimpse into the unknown.

The Three of Blades displays the bloody hand beside a body that appears to have been the victim of a sacrificial ritual. Certain aspects of the ritual are off, and it's obviously more of a ritualistic killing than anything of an arcane nature, but these are details that allow even a mundane individual a chance at identifying the nature of the card. Because here the card is a warning of deception in progress. The misdirection of the arcane for the nefarious mundane. Inverted, it is a sign of needing deception to accomplish a goal.

The handprint on the Ten of Blades is up high on the wall behind the victim. This is another scene of death, but the hand here is a secret message, hidden in the background. It is a guide to look more deeply into the present for a detail one might have missed. Inverted, this card offers confusion for all involved. It creates chaos within events. To use this knowledge to one's advantage requires thinking about things one does not expect to happen.

The bloody palm of the Five of Blades rests between the focal individuals legs. It tells of something left behind and seemingly unimportant that can bring trouble to the boastful or overconfident. Inverted in its presentation, the card offers insight into a past failure, whether through new investigation or re-evaluation of efforts.

The hand also appears on the Ace of Blades. Emblazoned on the side of the deadly satellite is a white palm print. This is different than many of the others as it refers to direct and decisive action that must be taken to keep the past at bay. It references the haunted past but shows a path to prevent said past from coming back to affect the present. Inverted, the beam shoots upward from the satellite and signals a need to bring events of the past forward to the present.

The Five and Six of Coins both show the hands. The Six has a half-print on a hat to indicate a lost enemy returning. Blood that has been spilled and a task thought complete returning. Inverted, we see the hand as a bloody event that will end in our favor. Handprints are a primary feature of the Five of Coins. While much goes on with this card and many different aspects can play a role or be used in a divination or advantage ritual, the handprints draw attention—and they very well should. They are in abundance, because this card shows ghosts of the past coming back en masse. Enemies that may be coming together to act or a gathering of forces from an unseen or unknown source. Inverted, the handprints are a mark of discontent. The open palm or similar image is a sign that forces work in opposition to one's goals.

- Things like this are the reason no one buys into divination. If a handprint is suddenly a sign of betrayal and someone who isn't doing anything wrong somehow ends up with the mark, they become a target. As a target they become the opposition, and someone goes and creates their own worst enemy.
- Thorn
- That is a frequent problem with divination, but not a reason to discount it. What was meant to be occurred even if it had to be pushed along a little bit.
- Lyran

The Seven of Batons represents hidden support. The faded hand is a sign of assistance that does not stand out. It is present even though one does not know of it. A discreet personal security officer provided by the corporation without disclosure. A team of runners hired for a parallel goal that protects particular interests. A rival suddenly engaged with another matter and no longer focused on their primary endeavor. Invert the card and those unseen forces are no longer in support of you but against you, but they always remain internal in nature.

The Nine of Batons shows a half-hand at the door frame, and the card itself does not reveal anything from the handprint but acts as an activator for many others who bear the hand. Inversion twists the message and power of both this card and the cards to which it connects. A boon can become a bane with this card present.

The Five, Six, and Seven of Cups all depict the star-palmed white hand. On their own, each is a warning of betrayal from someone close. The location on each relates to the type of person that will turn. The Five shows the hand on a manhole cover, meaning the betrayal will come from below or from someone within a support position. On the Six, it hides among the other icons and trophies at the center. The loss here will be central, long-standing, or pivotal. The Seven hides the hand up high and in the background. Betrayal will come from either a source above or from the past, and it will arrive in obscure fashion. The inverted meaning for each of these relates to seeking out someone for a betrayal. The positions do not reverse, so the direction in which one looks remains the same.

The only card of the Major Arcana to bear the hand is the Ride. The metal leopard seems to stare at a star-palmed hand. It shows a need for distraction, but not a simple small distraction—it must be something to draw in the target. The metal leopard is surrounded by excitement, but it focuses on the hand.

Children appear throughout the images of the Tarot. The appearance of so many children across the images is a message from this Tarot deck that our Sixth World is in its youth. The aspects of the children, some starving and begging, others rich and spoiled, and many in between, are messages about our world and where it stands. When utilizing these cards or seeking to divine a meaning, the children are a clue to one's place in the world and standing within the events. These reflections are more general than specific. Children with a positive appearance refer to a positive aspect, while a negative appearance means a negative aspect.

There is one place in all these that a warning needs to be offered. There is no child depicted on Karma, but above the focal character's head is the phrase "Save the

Children" (a phrase that makes multiple appearances in the deck). This card, when connected to any of those with a child, means a challenge to the Sixth World itself. This may be the involvement of extraplanar powers or a wild power play by an individual in power.

We see symbols of sacrifice along with many reflections of the Meso-American motif within the tarot. Part of this is the strong connection between the deck and Aztechnology, but the cards themselves each offer a different clue or connection to power. The presence of these cards means the touch or presence of Aztechnology. The difference for each is read from the other aspects of the card. The Eight of Blades seeks rebirth through fire, or energetic expenditures. The Three of Blades desires sacrifice through deception. The High Priestess speaks of change through control and the wearing of masks. Inverted, all three cards become simple symbols for the need for sacrifice.

I can see some of you are becoming overwhelmed. We have only two more symbols, the tree and wings, to discuss so please bear with me.

The tree—a symbol of knowledge, growth, family, and transcendence—appears in several different forms. Each appearance offers a different aspect in the telling. The tree above the trio on the Three of Coins is about knowledge, or in this case planning and knowing. Success when this card is in play will only be possible through knowledge and planning. Inverted, it shows a wise enemy, someone who knows about the plan in place and must be defeated even with that knowledge. The King of Batons stands within a burning forest of trees and bears a single branch. One must be ready to grow, sometimes through first cleansing of the old, when this card is laid before them. Inverted it means troubling times ahead. The fire is coming, but the subsequent growth is not a guarantee.

The Ace of Cups bears the bleeding tree as a focus of the image. Family is the bleeding tree. Bloodlines severed or spreading from the roots mean growing challenges from the family as their influence spreads. This can mean a literal family but may also refer to some of the metaphorical families of the Sixth World such as the North American Mafia, the Da'Naan families, or the intricate webs of connections made on the street that are stronger than the bonds of blood or ties of genes. Inverted, it represents a loss of support.

Among the trophies displayed on the Seven of Cups is one with a tree. The tree here represents transcendence in one's endeavors. Efforts must go beyond the physical to achieve the goals or gain access to the secrets of a tale with this card. Inverted, it warns of a block to this path in the form of the two-headed snake.

Wings, in their myriad forms, make up my final selection for this presentation and cover a wide range of meanings, some paired on the same card. This pairing creates parallel interpretations that can involve both symbols as well as one or the other. These cards are some of the most difficult to read on their own and often require several other cards to truly understand. I'll conclude with those.

The unsupported staff of the Aes Sídhe Banrìgh to me speaks of a lonely journey, travels made without the aid or support of others. The message here is independence from others even more than the movement aspect presented by the wings. As I have mentioned before in reference to movement or travel, it does not always signify some great distance. Inverted, the lack of support is forced. One will not have a choice in their independence when this card is in play.

The bat-like wings on Threshold refer to a journey being made at night or in secret. This is similar to the batwings rising up in the cage in the background of the Four of Cups. Threshold in play means the journey is paramount to the action, while the Four of Cups means a journey more peripheral, in the background, or non-essential to the events. A side job, as the street parlance goes. Both cards inverse to show greater opposition ahead.

The Awakened World places the winged figure within or beyond the portal or reflection. I, among many other scholars, have not yet decided whether the ouroboros surrounds a portal or a mirror in this image. I consider the image a portal due to the double level of travel and the likely difficulty of the latter journey. This card often requires travel to the metaplanes or at minimum the astral in order to achieve one's goals or utilize the power of the card. Inversion of the card in a reading emphasizes the mundane over the Awakened. It is a sign that mundane means will be necessary to overcome an Awakened threat. Many see this card as a sign of technology over magic. That view is short-sighted and discards the value of man without his technological enhancements.

My meditations on the Page of Blades were extensive due to the one interesting aspect. I focused on the wings on the wall behind the girl and their seemingly dual connection to the girl and the cherub. The reading of the image is one of protection. The cherub, upgraded with the firepower of the gun it holds, has turned its wings to rise above the girl. They almost appear to sprout from the back of the girl rather than the cherub, giving the second meaning for this card: a hidden ability. No one would suspect the girl of having angel wings. When this card is in play, someone will be more than they appear, and some other force will be protecting them.

The Ace of Coins shows a bird flying on one of the side monitors. The bird is soaring above all other things and represents the heights of Saeder-Krupp, the main focus of the image. The Tarot uses this card as a warning to avoid becoming too lofty in your efforts. It does not say you cannot be the soaring bird, flying high above your rivals; it simply warns of the dangers of having your reach go beyond your grasp. I am sure the presence of Saeder-Krupp, a megacorp so recently deposed from its place atop the heap, is no coincidence. Inverted, it shows a need for a better perspective. It is a clue for one

to rise higher and look down over what is going on to get a better grasp.

Twice in the deck we have modern wings appear. The jumbo jet shown in the AR of the Two of Coins as well as the squadron of fighter jets that represent the mighty sticks on the Eight of Batons contain the modern version of wings but offer very different metaphoric advice. The jumbo jet is a massive need. It could be a need for many things or many people, or it could be a symbol of cooperation on a grand scale. The fighter jets are similar but speak of the need for a small group to work together. It may not be specifically eight, but there will be a need for small-scale coordination, such as those skills offered by the deniable assets known as shadowrunners. Inversion changes the jumbo jet to a warning of glut. Too much will weigh down the actions at hand, and the fighters become obstacles. A series of them that must be overcome individually.

The doubles, and one triple, are far more difficult to divine to a single definition of their power or portent. The simple presence of two similar, sometimes contradictory, images on the card muddles the ability of even the best diviner to decipher the true meaning. The Tarot, it seems, is deliberately befuddling us. What I can offer in way of more certainty is that the location in which the divining activities conducted, along with the additional cards or tools in use, will have an effect on which of the wings are touched on for these cards.

The Avatar, Seven of Cups, and ...404... all involve a dragon and its leathery wings. The Avatar and ...404... have the dragons in a tattoo and a helmet logo respectively. The tattoo symbolizes a change to the person, a permanent mark of the wings or of flight and movement. The dragon on the helmet is first anchored with a skull, connected by a death to a single place, making it not a permanent aspect of the individual but an accoutrement, or decoration of them that they use for protection (hence the helmet). On the Seven of Cups, the dragon's wings are not the point but simply a part of the logo of the Draco Foundation. This card points to their presence in events to come, unless the ritual highlights the wings of the robed figure. The robed figure is mysterious, a stranger to the story. With wings, it means they will travel to reach their goal, which offers a small clue to their identity. If the ritual offers both, you have gained two clues about your mysterious interloper. ...404... makes an intriguing contrast between the leathery wings of the dragon on the helmet and the peaceful symbol of the dove, which is already twisted by its bloody claws and slain kin. Here, the dove reveals a clue to betrayal coming from afar. Inverted, the dove requires betrayal and sacrifice to accomplish its goals.

The final pair that I wish to speak of are a king and queen, but not of the same Arcana. The Queen of Cups and King of Blades display wings, but they are different from others as the wings are on angelic figures. The angel on the cup covers her private areas and is thus a

symbol of hiding what is most precious. The weeping angel on the king is a symbol of the sadness, anguish, and pain created by the violence of this card, even though the king himself sits in calm repose.

I can tell a few are looking back or thinking of several other images in which a bird is depicted, but I refrained from referencing wings unless they were extended, therefore emphasizing the wings as much if not more than the bird itself. I also did not include every wing that appears. Many I have yet to decipher the visions to be certain about which symbols are truly significant.

My final topic will be on the phrases and writing. They are not trivial background and are, in my experience, the most significant aspect in discovering the power of the cards or the purposes of a divination.

We see the ...

- It ends there because an extraction team blasted in and the rest is a lot of shattering glass, swearing, gunfire, and screaming.

  A private preview of this piece led a small group of our own to seek the new location of Hansu. They found him and gathered the next piece of information. It's not a continuation of the first piece; it's quite disjointed because it includes clips of some divinations Hansu had while drugged by his captors.

  We aren't exactly sure what they mean. Or, more bluntly, we don't have a damn clue. But here they are.
- Glitch

INTERPRETATIONS

Each vision is followed by text in a different font that provides one interpretation of what the vision can mean. This can be a resource for gamemasters, but they do not need to feel limited to use only those interpretations.

RECORDED 20-08-2078

Controlling the yellow stone. The devil's angel is our guide this night. We must touch the world beyond and battle the firefighter who prevents us, else we become the fallen man, the fallen world. The fleeing prisoner knows the secret, knows the path, knows the truth. The breaking grip, the end, the error. We must not break, we must follow the path, walk through the door, open our hearts and minds.

The devil's angel is the Threshold to other metaplanes. This means the prophecy involves some kind of doorway, path, or travel between planes. Touching the world beyond is the Two of Batons, connected to the Page of Batons as the firefighter. It refers to a need to touch this other world and not let the doorway, represented by the vault, be protected or contained. The fleeing prisoner is on the Two of Cups. The prisoner is held in the Seelie Court and is a person who knows a secrets of traveling through the rift at Yellowstone to get to the Court. The breaking grip is The Bastard standing on the fingers of the man clinging to the edge of the window. It shows the situation is precarious with the power on the wrong side. The break, the path, the door, the hearts, and the minds are flashes of images on various cards.

The Yellowstone Calamity, the event that opened a metaplanar gateway to the Seelie Court, has plenty of trouble that it is waiting to unleash. The gateway is "powered" by the natural energy of the caldera. Using the gateway helps pull energy from the caldera and prevent an explosive build up. This isn't common knowledge, and revealing it doesn't favor either of the sides involved in dealing with the passageway between worlds. Neither side wants abundant travel, but that's a way to prevent the caldera exploding.

The escaping prisoner is Dr. Alimar Emmington, Th.D. She did extensive research on the caldera for the Sioux Nation but then disappeared. She was taken to the Seelie Court and questioned by the Queen in Exile, and she is now being held as her prisoner. She knows the secret of the caldera-gateway connection, and many parties on both sides of the rift are anxious for her information to get out. Other powers, of course, would like to keep it hidden.

RECORDED 26-08-2078

The ghost dancers rise. The earth speaks. Strength comes to the feather. The firefighter, the firestarter, the blue hawk, the crowned revenant, the skeletal rose, the wild-woman, the mercenary, the blue dancer, the waterspeaker, the bloody ork, and the steel rider come together...

Or...

The branchbearer comes at dawn.

The firefighter is on the Page of Batons. This card reveals the need for the NAN countries to have control over the Yellowstone Anomaly. The firestarter is on the Page of Coins and reveals the need for the NAN countries to use the rift and protect their control of it, with fire (violence) if necessary. The blue hawk is on The Avatars and represents Dr. Alimar Emmington, Th.D. She was

mentioned above, and she needs to be part of the NAN council that determines how to work with the rift and the Seelie Court. She is not happy about being a captive of the Lady Thisbe, the Queen in Exile. The crowned revenant is on The Vigilante. She represents the need to be proactive against forces trying to gain control of the rift. The skeletal rose is on …404… and represents the Sioux Nation and their part to play as the armed watchers over the peace. The wild-woman is on the Five of Batons, and she is an icon of the Algonkian-Manitou Council. The AMC contains wild magics that need to be used to help control the anomaly via ley lines. The mercenary is on the Ten of Batons. This card reveals a need for shadowrunners and mercenaries. The blue dancer is on the Three of Cups and represents the Athabaskan Council and Trans-Polar Aleut nations that will be targeted by outside forces trying to manipulate the NAN through members that may feel they are not directly affected by Yellowstone but actually are, as they will need to utilize local magical sites to feed into controlling the anomaly. The waterspeaker is on the Page of Cups and represents the Salish-Shidhe Nation and the tribes of the Pacific Northwest. The bloody ork is on the Page of Blades and represents the Cascade Orks who will be utilized as part of the plan to control the anomaly. They are smugglers and warriors who will help move people around, especially from Seattle, Tír Tairngire, and California Free State. The steel rider is on the Knight of Blades. This represents the tech-savvy and more modern Pueblo Corporate Council. They will be needed as the face of modern and ancient traditions merged to contain a catastrophe.

The branchbearer is on the King of Batons and shows the results of failing to control and contain the anomaly. The dawn it refers to is the dawn of a new century and the detonation of the caldera in 2100 if the NAN cannot get control over it and keep its power contained.

RECORDED 01-09-2078

The emerald cut jagged. The burning needle lights the way. The beat cop holds the truth. Fire on the border reveals an enemy. The dwarf king leads the restless. The burdened troll is the struggle of the young. Strawberry wine becomes the future.

The burning needle is a reference to the space needle on The Tower and shows that events in this divination focus on Seattle. "The beat cop holds the truth" refers to the Knight of Batons and reveals the role of law enforcements in coming events. It also acts as one of several cards to show hate against metahumans. "Fire on the border" refers to the Page of Coins and shows a Native American woman and fire in the background, revealing that the NAN will play a part of events in a violent way. The dwarf king refers to the King of Blades, which in this interpretation is Gimli Harris, a leader of the Underground. The burdened troll refers to the Five of Cups, and "the struggle of the young" is the struggle of the young races as racism and anti-meta spread in Seattle thanks to the legacy of former Governor Brackhaven—and a certain parting gift he left. Strawberry wine is the Nine of Cups and refers to a future with elves in control, humans complacent and docile, and trolls serving gleefully.

Brackhaven didn't leave Seattle peacefully, and he is a spiteful son of a slitch. He left orders (and funding) to all the loyal members of the Humanis Policlub and Human Nation in Seattle. Quite simply, spread violence and hate against metahumans to sew chaos. Push pro-meta groups to the brink so that they respond to violence with violence, then make sure you blanket the media with depictions of metas as violence-prone and out of control.

Metahumans are not the only targets. Violence against Native Americans is included, and tensions mount along the border towns near the NAN, especially in areas of Redmond and Puyallup that already lack strong security presences. The Salish-Shidhe respond with political pressure on Seattle, while reaching out to other members of the NAN to discuss reclaiming Seattle.

The Underground is part of the solution, and Gimli Harris has the chance to lead the metahuman-heavy district toward a non-violent solution as he pushes for real investigations into what is going on—investigations that could be performed by shadowrunners with reporters embedded in their teams.

Tír Tairngire may not be part of the NAN, but they are happy to step in and offer assistance in negotiating peace. The right evidence against Brackhaven will reveal a need for an outside "impartial" mediator, and the Tír fits the bill, as they are not likely to have been influenced by Brackhaven. They use the arbitration to get a foothold in Seattle and then push north through the SSC to take military control of Seattle.

RECORDED 14-10-2078

The virus seeks its cure. Save the children from the chaos and the madness. The child holds tight to comfort as the mad tech takes hold. The station in the sky shows the true way. The crying lady shows the thoughts of man. Guilt tops the tower while the troll of hearts plays the savior. The empty throne shows the braver path. The sword in the sky shows the error of our ways.

"Save the children" and the child holding tight to comfort refer to the Five of Coins. Here they represent the children or the future, and the mad tech is cognitive fragmentation disorder (CFD). The station in the sky refers to The Higher Power and represents the space vehicle that the Monads plan to use to get away from humanity. The crying lady is on the Nine of Blades, which are weapons raining down on Boston. This is one plan to end the Boston problem. "Guilt tops the tower" refers to the NeoNET logo on top of the Space Needle on The Tower, revealing who will take the blame for CFD. The "troll of hearts" is the Four of Coins, representing Evo, who will take in the Monads who stay behind and help those who wish to leave even though they deserve as much blame as NeoNET. The empty throne is the King of Coins, representing the void and emptiness created by the Monads' departure. The "sword in the sky" is the Ace of Blades and shows what the Monads will do if they are forced to stay or attacked.

Taken together, this becomes a warning about the paths that can be taken with the Monad situation. There are several events that will fall into place to match the predictions set forth by the cards, but other elements can be manipulated to prevent certain outcomes—or help them along. One of the current plans to deal with Boston is to blast it into non-existence with Thor shots—wipe it out and then rebuild, or just let nature reclaim it. Lay all the cost on NeoNET and let that one megacorporation burn and crumble for the whole thing.

An alternative to this is being proposed by Evo. They are already improving their relationship with the Monads by not retaliating for the loss of Gagarin Base on Mars and other assets. They are taking in Monads that understand their existence and have been working with them to give them the freedom they seek among the stars. Evo is offering, with the help of the Monads, to go into Boston and solve the problem a different way. Powerful Monads can exert control over the crazy head cases. They want to use this ability to bring those CFD sufferers out of Boston and take them on a space flight to Mars, or to use them as labor in various space stations.

If the Monads are allowed to leave unhindered, nothing happens, as represented by the empty throne on the King of Coins. This is not likely the case in the Sixth World, and the Monad response is represented by the Ace of Blades: Space-based weapons used in precision strikes to retaliate against those who try to stop them.

RECORDED 31-10-2078

Code error. The slayer revealed by the fallen nartaki. The star burns in the sky. The firefighter guards the prison in the earth, but the crying lady shatters it from the sky. The crowned knows vengeance, and the fire-haired waif is free. The burdened troll has made a grave mistake.

The fallen nartaki is on the Seven of Batons, with NeoNET's logo high up on the smokestack above. The Tower again has the NeoNET logo, and it burns to show the fall of NeoNET. The firefighter is the Page of Batons, who guards a vault. This represents the AI vault in Albuquerque where the CFD virus originated and where some AIs are still held. The crying lady is the Nine of Blades and shows the strike from the sky which is part of the Monad plan. Vengeance is represented by flashes of The Vigilante and the crown dangling from her neck. The Four of Cups has the fire-haired waif who lives a free life adored by others. The Five of Cups shows the burdened troll, demonstrating the effects of these events as a burdensome error to the cause of the Monads.

The Monads control several space-based weapons platforms thanks to their invasive code and proliferation in the confines of space. When NeoNET is blamed for Boston, but nothing is revealed about Albuquerque and the true root of the problem, a sect of Monads decides to remedy this through an attack on the hidden lab in Albuquerque.

They use ground-based assets to bring in several signal-boosting devices to the area around the lab. They then use a pair of modified Thor shots to hit the lab. The first shatters the earth above to reveal the structure, and the second hits and uses construction nanites to tear through both the remainder of the walls and the Faraday cage that keeps signals from getting through.

The event looks to the world like an attack and goes poorly for the Monad media image that Evo is trying to help them create.

RECORDED 01-11-2078

The ram can rise. The Tower shows the way. The Chief Executive in inverse shows the way. The Higher Power in inverse shows the way. The Shadows shows the way. Karma shows the way. The Four of Batons shows the way. The way will be revealed.

"The ram can rise" is a reference to Ares and a path set forth by the deck for Ares to rise to power. All the cards need to be gathered by someone at Ares and then

the actions they require put into play in order for this path to be found and traveled.

The Tower shows them that they need to profit off the collapsing NeoNET and buy up their assets. This will require them to shift their focus from internal issues and obtain assets while they are available.

The Chief Executive means they need to change their leadership. This means Knight, Vogel, and everyone else in power. The deck reveals that they need new guidance, which can be read as promoting totally new leadership.

The Higher Power is a reference to Spinrad, and in inverse it indicates a need to overcome Spinrad. The card will reveal Ares' need to prevent competitors from getting a power base in their backyard. It shows that Ares needs to get control of the St. Louis Archology, a NeoNET resource that is currently on the slate to go to Spinrad thanks to some backroom dealings.

The Shadows shows dogs fighting, revealing a fight to get what they need and also the man in shadows, meaning Ares needs to use a lot of shadow assets to be successful.

Karma shows Ares needs to make sacrifices. It reveals that Ares needs to take a hard stance against the aspects of their corporation that have been infiltrated by insect shamans. They need to cut them loose and destroy their own parts in order to make the whole stronger.

RECORDED 13-11-2078

He seeks the goal of the moon and sees his name. He is the King of Coins, ever moving with an empty throne. Allies are clear while enemies hide upon the long-legged lady. The needle must fall to ash. Bound, he seeks the way. The red bird must stay free. The trifold blade must be kept at bay. The Valkyr lady must survive.

The Tarot can reveal the way for Spinrad to finally get the place in the Corporate Court that he feels he deserves. Spinrad is represented by the King of Coins.

The Two of Batons shows both a needed ally and a threat to his success. The woman points to the location for Global Sandstorm's headquarters, an alliance that must occur for Spinrad to be successful in his bid for the Court seat. The warning of a threat comes in the form of the words on the floor, "mars quaerit belli portas", which translate to "Mars seeks gates of war" and refers to Ares' desire to take the Archology in St. Louis.

The needle refers to The Tower and NeoNET being completely destroyed. None of its pieces can survive, and Spinrad will need to act against Transys and Erika in order to guarantee his seat on the Court.

Bound, he seeks the way is a clue from the Two of Cups where the bound figure (Spinrad) runs towards a doorway with "AEDIS JANI" above it. AEDIS JANI is originally mistranslated for the Temple of Janus and keeps Spinrad confused. The real reference is Temple January 1, and the boa of yellow flowers is the clue and reference to the paro yellow flowers of temples in Asia, in particular the Tiger's Nest Monastery. It means Spinrad needs to be at the temple at the start of the New Year.

The red bird refers to the DocWagon VTOL on the Five of Cups. Its presence shows the need for DocWagon to stay as an independent AA, rather than join into the umbrella of a AAA or join together with other A- or AA-rated megacorps. If Spinrad wants his seat guaranteed he needs to keep DocWagon independent, even if the corp wants to join with others.

The trifold blade is the Three of Blades and represents Aztechnology, a megacorporations that Spinrad needs to keep at bay. He can't afford having them interfere with his appointment so he needs to keep them appeased or away from his efforts.

Last is the Valkyr lady who appears on the Four of Blades. The image holds clues to her identity but doesn't reveal exactly who it is. She is an elf. The tattoo on her arm combines a badge and a Roman helmet, revealing that she works for Knight Errant. Her place in the tube means she is sick or injured. The concerned ork and human boy beyond the glass provide clues to the people who care about her. Spinrad needs to find out who she is before it is too late if he wants to guarantee his seat.

RECORDED 03-12-2078

The hidden place reveals the deepest secrets. Sleeping Beauty and Elvis guide the way to deeper mysteries.

Sleeping Beauty is on the Four of Blades. The numbers 41, 37 are on the readout and represent the longitude, but do not tell whether it is east or west. Elvis is the ork in the Pentagon jacket with 60'6"S on the sleeve, providing the latitude.

The location is -60.6, -41.37. It points to an underwater mountain range between the southern tip of South America and the Adelaide Peninsula on Antarctica.

Hidden beneath the freezing waters is …

SCANNING..... (41,37)
VALKYR, INC.

Approve
FLUFFE ARMED

PEOPLE

"*Hey*! Watch it ya fraggin' halfer!"

Kyle ignored the ork as he smashed past, bolting down the alley as fast as his short legs could carry him. Bits of trash flew everywhere as he bounced off several containers.

Running, Kyle cursed several things; his show, agreeing to that stupid meet, and, most immediately, his stubby legs and low endurance. His lungs already felt like they were on fire. Fear and adrenaline wouldn't take him much further.

Something slammed into his back, and an arc of pain surged through his body. The last thing he remembered before darkness claimed him was falling into something brown, smelly, and wet.

A slap in the face brought Kyle back to consciousness; lances of a bright light directly in front of him assaulted his eyes. He tried to move, but his limbs were bound tightly to a chair. Beyond the brightness, Kyle saw several large silhouettes. Then an elf with flawless features and perfect hair sporting an immaculate business suit swaggered forward.

"Mr. Blacklighter, so good to meet you, big fan of your show. But I'm afraid they'll have to go into reruns because we need to have a nice, *long* conversation about Angelica McKinnon," he announced while securing a suppressor to a large pistol.

Kyle flinched. This was it; he'd finally gotten too close, let himself get too excited after that biff had shown him an actual Sixth World Tarot card. He should've known better. Should've let it and her go when she vanished.

Kyle stiffened as the suppressor touched his foot.

Then, something exploded nearby, followed by several sharp cracks and flashes. To Kyle's right, something snap-popped, and thick smoke billowed in. Chaos erupted a second later as silhouettes turned and raised weapons. Automatic weapons from both directions hammered away, and the elf reacted, kicking Kyle over and raising his pistol. Three sharp cracks sounded. The back of the elf's head exploded in a burst of gore.

Five seconds later, it was over.

Through the smoke, several armor-clad mercenaries emerged and neatly swept the area with their weapons, each one calling out "*Clear*!" in turn as they drew near. Two of the mercs began scanning the faces of the deceased, notifying their leader of the stylized skull nano-tats on their foreheads.

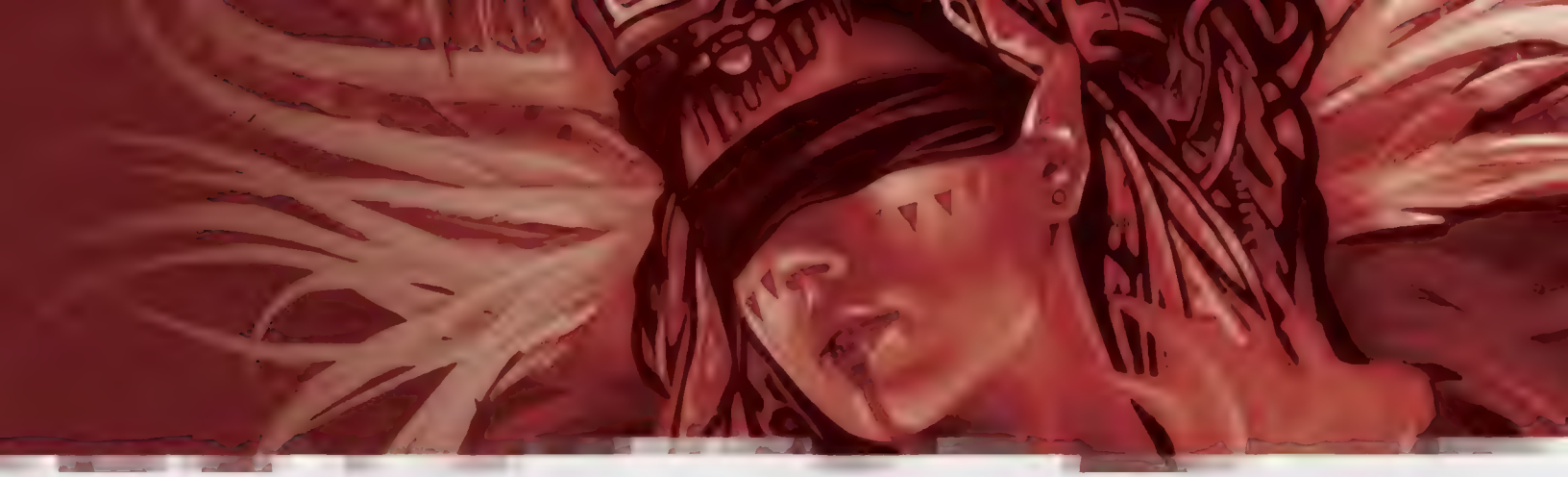
Strong hands hoisted Kyle up and cut him free. Rubbing his wrists, Kyle realized he was in a warehouse as he saw another figure stride in. He was a middle-aged human male, dressed in a plain armored jacket and carrying a heavy pistol.

"Colonel, ready when you are," he said to the lead merc.

The merc nodded and spoke into his headset while walking away, "Bravo Zero-Six to all units, objective secure, exfil in two minutes."

Kyle swallowed hard as he recognized the newcomer. "Ah ... hoi there, Glitch. Look chum, s-sorry for not making the meet, but things ah ... thanks for the rescue?"

"Shut it," Glitch growled. "Given what I've just risked and spent to rescue your sorry ass, you'd better have the paydata on my daughter you promised, *scan*?"



POSTED BY: GLITCH

As you should have figured out by now, if you get involved in the chase for Tarot cards, or any activities connected to them, you won't be alone. Plenty of others are involved in ways large and small, so we've gathered a few highlights, notable names that might help or hinder you in your chase. Due to the apparent close connections between the Seelie Court and the Sixth World Tarot, some of these people have a decidedly metaplanar aspect to them. Read on and find new possibilities for allies and enemies.

KAZE ADEKI

LEADER TRU-13

POSTED BY: NETCAT

Some may accuse me of giving a biased account of Kaze Adeki, but I don't care. As far as I'm concerned, the man is a soulless monster. For the past fifteen years, he's lead MCT's infamous Thaumaturgical Research Unit 13 on a number of questionable operations for the corp, including the *appropriation* (read: kidnapping) of technomancers for experimentation.

Although Adeki's official service record has been largely redacted, a few facts are known. He was born approximately fifty years ago in what's now Neo-Tokyo. His early life was spent training to carry on the family tradition of sumo wrestling, but he was recruited by MCT when his adept powers manifested at age fourteen. He disappeared until age twenty, reappearing as part of a MCT special security operative in Seattle specializing in neutralizing spirits.

- When his powers manifested, Adeki almost killed his sparring partner. His entire body channeled mana like a punch or kick. He calls this technique *Karadayama no Ken,* or roughly "Mountain Body Fist." Best advice when facing him: Shoot from a distance with a big gun and never let him get hands on you.
- Mihoshi-Oni

After several years in special security protecting several high-priority facilities, personnel, and projects worldwide, Adeki was transferred to TRU-13 in 2064. He became its leader less than a year later, after relieving his CO from command for "dishonor and cowardice in the face of the enemy" when they faced off against toxic spirits in Europe. Adeki was given a special commendation for that mission, and the incident set the tone for his style of command.

- I've heard about that. That former CO actually ordered a retreat, but Adeki wasn't having any of it. He promptly snapped the CO's neck then led a counter-attack, and won. Adeki reportedly has scars all across his chest from the encounter, which he considers a badge of honor.
- Picador

As TRU-13's leader, he's utterly devoted to MCT (some say brainwashed), doing whatever is necessary to accomplish his mission objectives with ruthless determination and tenacity. If a target is required to be taken alive, they will be. Everyone *around* the objective is a different story. This is the heart of Adeki's operational philosophy, a doctrine he calls *Mobairuzerozon,* or "Mobile Zero-Zone." That phrase pretty much explains how he operates. Subordinates are expected to carry out their orders or die trying. Those who fail Adeki often commit seppuku rather than face his displeasure. To date, Adeki has retired at least fifteen agents for failure.

Physically, Adeki retains the physique of a sumo wrestler, which showcases his raw physical power but belays his agility. These combined factors make him lethal in hand-to-hand combat. He's not bad with firearms, although he disdains most melee weapons. Combine his physical gifts with his tactical prowess and determination, and you get someone you definitely should not frag with.

KYLE BLACKLIGHTER

NEON ASCENSION HOST

POSTED BY: GLITCH

There's determination, and then there's obsession. The difference? The determined usually have enough sense to know when it's time to back off for their own frag-

ging good. The obsessed, not so much. Unfortunately for him, Kyle Blacklighter falls into the latter category.

Kyle Blacklighter (formerly Cooper) is a forty-six-year-old dwarf male born in San Francisco who escaped to Los Angeles during the whole General Saito takeover in the mid '60s. Like many in LA, he tried his hands at becoming a sim-star/writer, but both career tracks went nowhere fast despite continued (and desperate) attempts. With no real skills, Blacklighter bounced from drek job to drek job for about fifteen years. Most of these jobs were third-shift affairs, during which Blacklighter discovered trix-casting.

- One of those jobs was kaf-jockey at a café in Downtown LA called Caffena's. Tech-geeks, mystic-hippies, neo-a types, burnouts, and all sorts of other types congregated there. It's where Kyle got his first taste of just how weird the Sixth World can be.
- Earthquake Jones

- Too bad they turned that place into a Taco Temple four months ago.
- Grinder

- Blacklighter is also a minor pariah in Frisco. Rumors persist that he sold out a lot of people to Saito's goon squads in exchange for a golden ticket out. True or not, people have long memories there.
- Sounder

His first trix-casts in early 2073 were rousing disasters because they lacked direction. It wasn't until he met Denise Greenfield and Trevor Darkholm (both conspiracy nuts and armchair occultists) that Blacklighter found the show's focus, and it became *Neon Ascension*. While NA's audience steadily grew, it wasn't until a year ago when Blacklighter discovered Dealer Net that things took a diabolically interesting turn.

Blacklighter became obsessed with the Sixth World Tarot, and before long stories, segments, and entire shows about the SWT were frequently featured on NA, much to Greenfield and Darkholm's growing irritation. Blacklighter even began chasing leads himself, usually sticking his nose in places it didn't belong, which almost got him killed on multiple occasions. Nowadays, Blacklighter eats, drinks, and sleeps the SWT.

The apex of his obsession came just over a month ago when he met a college student named Angel at a rave in El Infierno. Long story short, she recognized him and showed Blacklighter a real (allegedly) SWT card, the Ten of Blades. Angel told Blacklighter it had simply shown up at her apartment. Thinking he had some sort of scoop, he tried to make arrangements for Angel to come on NA and have one of the experts he knew authenticate the card. She agreed, but two days later, Angel disappeared without a trace.

Blacklighter projects an on-air persona of a humble everyman looking for answers to make sense of the insanity and weirdness around him. In reality Blacklighter is intensely insecure and afraid of losing everything after years of being nobody. He sees the SWT as his golden ticket. I hoped that when Blacklighter started his investigations it was to find Angel, not the card. I was wrong. Blacklighter is convinced that Angel is his only shot at getting his hands on a real SWT card, which could lead to more. From what I can tell, he's taking dangerous chances and seems almost possessed by the need to find the card.

The obsession may be unhealthy for Blacklighter, but through his show he's developed a large network of contacts, some even worthwhile. One of the biggest problems Blacklighter has, though, is his inability to keep his mouth shut or filter what data he shares with others. Be careful, because what you say around him may well end up on his show.

- Can't help but notice that you seem somewhat intimately familiar with Blacklighter. Not to call you out, but do you know something, Glitch?
- Bull

- Okay, normally don't do this, but full disclosure. Angel's real name is Angelica McKinnon, and she's my daughter. And yes, I'm looking for paydata. You all know the drill and know I'll pay. PM is open. And FYI, I've taken a personal interest in Blacklighter's continued well-being. Keep that in mind.
- Glitch

- Glitch, I'm so sorry. I'll find what I can for you, one parent to another.
- Netcat

- Thank you.
- Glitch

- Well we better move fast, and he better watch his back. I heard that some really nasty slags tried to snatch the halfer last week.
- Treadle

- You're not wrong, but that particular threat has been neutralized. For now.
- Rifleman

JOYGIRL-IX

INDEPENDENT AGENT

POSTED BY: FIANCHETTO

My mother was fond of saying that some people come into your life for a reason, some a season, and some a

lifetime. I don't know about the latter, but I know that Joygirl-IX—or simply Joy because I detest that label—made her profession falling into the first two categories. I have known Joy for many years and will tell her story as much as I can, out of respect for her and a desire to spread facts, not conjecture.

Joy is a metahuman female between twenty-five and thirty-five years old. I say "metahuman," because during our first meeting, which I will *not* get into, I discovered that she had at some point been the recipient of extensive facial surgeries. Her natural face has been shaped into something that distorts human features enough to look quite alien. But the how, when, and why she received those surgeries is unknown; Joy is an amnesiac and does not remember anything prior to our meeting. The only identifying mark she has is the Roman numeral IX on her lower back.

Eventually, fragments of memories re-surfaced, mostly manifesting as nightmares. Numerous skills re-surfaced too, along with her decking abilities. But of greater note are her skills in acting and imitation. During our association, I saw her imitate individuals to an extremely frightening degree—were it not for her looks, I would have sworn they were the same person. That goes for both males and females.

Her personality can only be described as fluid. She will literally take on whatever personality is required at the time or what is expected of her current guise. It is the ultimate in method acting, and she often becomes lost in the part. With the right application of cosmetics and prosthesis, Joy can easily pass as human, elf, or ork. She has also been known to impersonate trolls and dwarves when only her face is being displayed. This is her specialty—becoming a new person or taking on the identity of another and inserting herself into someone's life. How long she keeps up the identity depends on the job. Joy once spent an entire year in deep cover.

I dare say that someone attempted to make Joy into a high-caliber infiltrator and it went horribly wrong.

- What? No mention of my photographic memory?
- Joygirl-IX

- I did not want to give away all of your secrets.
- Fianchetto

- Don't worry, old friend. If I was worried, this never would have gotten out. And no one would have seen me coming, or going. Still, I find this oddly flattering.
- Joygirl-IX

- I find it mildly creepy.
- Clockwork

Eventually we parted. I like to think on good terms, but toward the end of our association, there was a tension between us. Joy always had to be doing something. Inactivity of any kind made her extremely anxious, at rare times to the point of violence. She said this once to me: "It's during the quiet when the noise in my mind becomes the loudest. Everything tries to come back at once, and I can't handle it. It's like a thousand voices screaming at me at the same time, and I just want them all to stop."

Since our separation, I have done my best to keep track of her and her exploits. The destruction of a metahuman trafficking ring in Morocco, AGS Minister Olaf Dryden's embezzlement scandal, and the infiltration of Darrington Prison in Seattle were all examples of her handiwork. Once she takes a job or focuses her attention on something, she will not stop until it's complete. And now it seems she has turned her attention on the Sixth World Tarot. I am honestly not sure if this is a good or bad thing.

- Don't worry about me. I have seen these among the fragments of my dreams. And for the first time, I have clarity of mind and purpose. But I beg of everyone reading this, *do not get in my way*. I will put the pieces of my mind back together, and these cards will show me the way. Maybe then I'll find peace.
- Joygirl-IX

EMILY LLANFRECHFA

MYSTIC SEER

POSTED BY: LADY GREENFIRE

Awakened gifts can be equal parts blessing and curse.

At the ripe old age of nine, Emily Llanfrechfa began having visions. Some were good, some were neutral, but enough were horrifying to the point where they almost shattered her mind. Her father, Lord Geraint Llanfrechfa of Wales, was powerless to help despite the aid of the best experts he could find. The visions kept coming, and young Emily seemed to be slipping farther and farther away.

Eventually, she saved herself through art, putting the images she saw into various mediums helped her deal with what she'd seen. She earned herself a hard-won measure of peace. Now age fifteen, Emily is an adept who is on the path of the Artist. Somewhat of a social butterfly and considered delicate because of her social anxiety, she is very caring and insightful. Without much of an interest in the material things of life, she is quite content to live quietly with what her father has given her, spending her day in artistic pursuits with painting and sculpting. Lord Geraint, for his part, does his best to keep his daughter out of the public eye, despite the requirements and expectations of his social and political station.

When she is forced into a social situation, especially in large groups, she often withdraws as soon as possible. With smaller groups, or one-on-one, she is more at ease.

- When Emily was born, it was a bit of a minor scandal. Lord Geraint, through a court order, had all information on Emily's mother sealed. This, of course, put the tabloid screamsheets into a frenzy trying to guess who Lord Geraint shagged. But it eventually became a non-story and people just lost interest.
- Chainmaker

- Also didn't hurt that Geraint was a runner back in the day with a staggering array of contacts to help enforce that court order.
- Bull

Now, in case everyone out there wonders what the point of this is, let me break it down. First, remember how I said that Emily is following the Artist's Way? Well, a couple of years ago, she actually allowed some of her work to be showcase. I remember seeing some during a London showing. It turns out there are a lot of elements in her art that correspond to (you guessed it) some of the known SWT cards. Mostly bits here and there, but some elements look like exact reproductions.

- For fun, I did a search and compared some of Emily's works. Her series "Third Eye" was most impressive. I took the four paintings and overlaid them. Guess what—they form a dead ringer for The Awakened World card.
- Pistons

Second, there is the matter of Emily's parentage. Yes, she half is Rom—Romanov Clan, to be exact. Emily's mother Alexia and Lord G had a brief romantic relationship, but between British and clan politics, they were forced apart. Why and how Emily came to be with her father is still a mystery.

More recently, there's the issue of the dead man found at the Llanfrechfa manor. Now, earlier it was mentioned that Scotland Yard had all data regarding the investigation locked down, but mates of mine have uncovered that the deceased was one Dmitri Romanov, Alexia's brother and Emily's uncle. Based on statements that didn't find their way into the official report, Dmitri had been attacked sometime before arriving at the manor. Even while bleeding out, he managed to get through security and into Emily's room so he could give her something. No real data on what, but given the Romanov Clan's current problems, I think it's safe to make some educated guesses.

- I think Lady Emily is about to be forced into a larger world. I hope she survives; her work is a real treasure.
- Winterhawk

ARMANDO SALAZAR

AZTECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

POSTED BY: RIFLEMAN

I don't have a lot of time and I don't want to overwhelm you with loads of raw data, so I'm going to seriously condense my files. You won't get a full explanation of who Salazar is—that would require more than I can currently give. But I can offer the highlights. Anyone who wants additional data can contact me via PM.

<OPEN DATA FILE: 67-32-11>

Subject is a human male approximately 1.85 centimeters tall, weight is approximately 82 kilograms (athletic build). He is of Aztlan nationality and origination. Subject has brown/golden eyes and shoulder-length dark/greying hair. Distinguishing features: wizened left arm.

Subject was born approximately sixty years ago in Acapulco, Aztlan (exact date unknown). At age ten, subject Awakened and began training/development of those abilities. In 2032, subject was enrolled in multiple university courses ranging from magical theory to multiple bio-sciences.

- Fun Fact: between thirty to forty percent of the Salazar family is awakened. How's that for odds?
- Pyramid Watcher

In 2037 at age twenty-two, subject graduated cum laude and was commissioned as a captain in the Aztlan Army's Medical Corps and was assigned to classified research projects. In 2047, subject transferred to Aztlan Military Intelligence as a colonel and remained in that position until 2078, when he retired as a vice general and accepted a position with Aztechnology.

In addition, subject is a high-level initiate, a devoted follower of the Path of the Sun, and a known blood mage.

In 2063, subject participated in a magic ritual designed to assassinate Yucatan leadership. The ritual failed, and magical energies were reflected back, resulting in damage to subject's left arm (only ten percent functionality). Magical abilities were apparently unaffected.

During his tenure in the Aztlan military, subject planned/orchestrated operations against Yucatan rebels in the early 2050s, and again between 2062 and 2064. During the Azt-Am War, subject was instrumental in ultra-black weapons projects, including the creation of Blue-227. He also helped create and coordinate the ritual component of Operation: Huntress.

- *What*?! Oh, Rifleman, we have to talk. And you're not ducking me this time.
- Frosty
- Didn't Aztlan use that Blue-227 stuff during Huntress to put the nail in Sirrurg's coffin?
- Scattershot

- I think so, but I'm more scared of what Salazar could or may do with a Tarot card, or several.
- Lyran

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES (PERSONAL)

Extremely rational, curious, and hyper-intelligent, Salazar is also a sociopath who only cares about the advancement of his personal knowledge and power. Everyone and thing around him is nothing more than an asset or resource to be cultivated until needed. And Ghost help anyone who takes what he believes is rightfully his. The only possible exception to this is his family, of which he's extremely (and sometimes violently) protective. Unless he needs them for a "higher purpose." Salazar only cares about the consequences of his actions in the context of how it affects future plans. He is purely Machiavellian—the ends justify the means, and he carefully plans his ends. Combined with his past deeds, knowledge, psychological tendencies, and current position, I consider Salazar a bona fide threat to metahumanity.

FARGUS SOL PHD/T

PROFESSOR OF ADVANCED MAGICAL THEORY

POSTED BY: ELIJAH

Let me say that doing research into Professor Sol's background has been one of the most frustrating endeavors I have ever undertaken. Even after calling in several favors, the only hard data I've been able to uncover is the official bio listed by the University of Prague. But then, it's the lack of data that gives me pause.

Officially, Professor Sol is an elf male born fifty-six years ago in a small town outside of Prague (convenient). He had an unremarkable life, got decent grades in school, Awakened at age sixteen, kept his head down, got a scholarship to University of Prague, graduated Cum Laude, began teaching and researching, and otherwise has lead a rather boring life. He even likes to wear ugly faux-wool sweaters with elbow patches and smoke a pipe.

That's the first red flag; this bio is almost too clean, too perfect.

Until about four years ago, he continued flying under the radar. He was known as an affable and decent but unremarkable instructor. Even his personal life was boring. No relationships, a modest house just outside of Prague, and no known vices save his pipe and the occasional drink at events. The most exciting thing he's known for outside of the university is his bike riding and nature walks.

But then, all of the sudden, he started getting a lot of attention. He published papers on multi-metaplanar mapping and mana-spirit energy dynamics during summoning that quickly became required reading at several universities around the world. He's become prominent and in-demand enough to turn down several multi-million nuyen contracts with at least three of the Big Ten. By all accounts, Professor Sol is in it for the knowledge, not the money.

- He's also not just a bookworm. There's talk among several circles that his personal grimoire contains hundreds of never-before seen spells; some made up, some he obtained from elsewhere.
- eX-Professor

- Getting hands on that sounds like a hell of a run.
- Mika

- Yeah. Don't let the academic shtick fool you. I saw footage taken during one of his field trips to the Amazonian rain forest where he zapped some kind of critter that looked like a cross between a gator and tiger (don't ask). That spell literally blew the thing apart. His stance and expression were pure warrior.
- Picador

Sol paired with Professor Herbert Shane in 2076, and the two seemed to be the next force to be reckoned with in the academic community after publishing their groundbreaking (and controversial) *Mind and Matter: Paradigms and Traditions Versus the Unified Magical Theory*. But when the pair of them started to talk about magical cards, academia started to turn on them, likely as backlash for *Mind and Matter*. Even today it's hotly debated. Instead of buckling to pressure from their peers and the university, the two doubled down and formed the Oracle Society.

- Fun fact: Everyone seems to think that Shane and Sol were like omaes. In reality, they personally hated each other. Shane resented the way Society members gravitated to Sol as the unofficial leader. In public and while working, they were able to hold it together to get the job done. In private, they became bitter rivals. Well, at least in Shane's mind. No one still knows what really happened to him in Morocco.
- eX-Professor

- Apparently, Shane's personal files contained a lot on the SWT that he didn't bother to share with Sol. He was particularly interested in the idea of the so-called master cards, and even more so with the projectors. He was also known to be a bit power-hungry.
- Lyran

- Maybe he wanted to use them against Sol. Speaking of, anyone have any additional data on whether or not the Society has authentic cards?
- DangerSensei

With Shane dead, Sol has been moving the Society forward, soliciting private donations to fund various expeditions and investigations. He's also been the one coordinating the Society's efforts, selecting individuals and assigning them to investigate specific leads regarding SWT cards.

Rumor is that despite offers to join the likes of the Draco Foundation, IOTND, and Atlantean Foundation, Sol is considering starting his own foundation with the help of several silent partners.

- Just found out through a contact that Sol is in the UK. Apparently he was on his way to Tír na nÓg but was denied access even though he supposedly had a visa direct from the Council of Stewards itself. Apparently, he's been trying to make contact with local runners to try to get across the border. WTF?
- Chainmaker

- This isn't his first trip to Tír na nÓg. Before his rise to prominence, Sol was frequently a guest of the Danaan Families and even members of the Seelie Court. He was even rumored to have been engaged to the daughter of a minor noble. Interesting connection for such a humble professor.
- Frosty

TASK FORCE 154

FBI SPECIAL UNIT

POSTED BY: LEGAL EAGLE

Since Kay is busy, I'll be pinch hitting for him on this one.

Leave it to the UCAS to come up with the most ineffective response to something and put the worst possible people in charge. This is the case with Task Force 154—frankly, I'm surprised that the so-called leaders of this mobile disaster haven't killed themselves yet.

The first member and erstwhile leader of TF154 is **Special Agent Richard "Rick" Sorenson**. If the old US of A was still around, this guy would be described as "All-American." Former Army Ranger turned CID with a hell of a lantern jaw, he joined the Bureau because he wanted to serve his country. A by-the-book hard-ass, Sorenson may not exactly be the fastest program in the cyberdeck, but he makes up for it with muscles (both real and augmented). Oops, I mean stubborn determination. When someone needs to be punched or shot, Sorenson is your guy. Too bad he hasn't quite mastered the art of delegation, organization, and investigation.

- He's also got connections. His father is Senator Sorenson of Pennsylvania, a close friend of the McKinnons. Anyone else wonder why he got this job?
- Hard Exit

- Yeah, considering that Sorenson also has enough excessforce complaints in his jacket to make Lone Star not want him. Hell, even Hard Corps turned this guy down!
- Sticks

Sorenson's second-in-command and thorn in his side is **Agent Amber Whitehouse**. A magician of low power, she was still able to (somehow) get accepted to MIT&T on a full-ride scholarship. Once there, she did the bare minimum required to graduate and continued to coast on what little magic she had to land her an easy research gig with the FBI, who are always desperate to get any magicians in their ranks. Her main job is to catalogue and summarize the field reports of various agents to make them understandable to laypeople. She was also sometimes called on to help said field agents with whatever research they needed. Otherwise, she just sat around and sipped soy lattes all day, playing *Groksmasher* on her 'link. And that was the way she liked it. Until TF154 formed, she could count on her hands the times she had to do any real investigating. Now, she's out in the field doing real work, getting real dirt and drek on her, and getting shot at with real bullets. Still, she at least has a lot of knowledge, and she supposedly dabbles with alchemy as a hobby.

- When not investigating a case, Whitehouse is usually filing complaints to her section chief about Sorenson. They tend to boil down to "He's making me do work," and "He's yelling at me, and I don't like it." I know the feds are desperate, but *damn*! I'm surprised that no one from TF154 has gotten killed yet.

  See, I'm not totally busy.
- Kay St. Irregular

- Then how in the hell do they keep clearing cases? I mean, I know they're supposed to be investigating the SWT, but they keep stumbling over other crimes and criminals like it was some kind of old Saturday morning cartoon! All they need is a dog sidekick and a van.
- Bull

- A what?
- Treadle

- Kids today don't appreciate the classics.
- Scattershot

- They may be clearing cases, but they have yet to recover a single SWT card. They've managed to get a lot of circumstantial data, but that's it. And rumor is that the higher-ups are not pleased.
- Sunshine

The one shining light and saving grace in this joke of the task force is their Interpol liaison officer, **Agent Ian Decker**. Called "that limey bastard" by Sorenson, Decker was assigned to help TF154 investigate instances of the SWT outside of the UCAS. A veteran agent of almost twenty years, Decker has seen a lot in his time and put more than his fair share of criminals away, and he has the scars to prove it. A solid agent and investigator, Decker is a bit of a technophobe, preferring to use older gear over implants. He even still carries the Colt Manhunter he was issued in 2061. How he got assigned to this is anyone's guess because he's, well, competent. If Decker wasn't on the task force, they would likely all be dead by now.

- I think I may have indirectly had something to do with Decker's current assignment. I may have terminated a high-priority mark that he was in charge of protecting. Despite his many admirable qualities, he still fragged up. But instead of being sacked, his bosses thought it would be more fun to torture him by assigning him to the feds or risk losing his pension. I hear he now gets through his new job by copious amounts of spirits and playing mind games with Sorenson and Whitehouse.
- Balladeer

- Another person of dis-honorable mention is the task force's Matrix specialist, Jan St. John. A dwarf technomancer from France, St. John was nabbed by the feds three years ago after a botched job in Philly. Given the choice of prison or becoming a civil servant. A top-notch data thief, St. John has a massive superiority complex and will not hesitate to let everyone know.
- Electric Blue

- This may sound odd, but I've been reviewingTF154's cases and have detected an odd pattern. Every time they get a lead, they travel to the target location to investigate. Then once there, they *always* seem to get a lucky break or tip that leads them to whatever misadventure that then leads to them solving some crime or mystery. I'm wondering if someone is using them as cat 's paws, because this seems a bit too coincidental.
- Sunshine

LADY XOC

FIRST AMONG SISTERS, (802) HIGH PRIESTESS FACTION

POSTED BY: UNCLE RABBIT

Since she was mentioned earlier in the Aligning the Court section, I thought I'd make myself useful and

shed light on Lady Xoc. As told to me by mi abuela, Lady Xoc visited Guatemala generations ago, in the '20s. She took some of our people with her, mostly young, Awakened girls if abuela Rosa remembers right. Afterwards, she returned inconsistently, but always when our people needed help of some kind. Abuela said the Lady had the sight, meaning she knew when things would take place before they happened. The last time Abuela Rosa saw Lady Xoc was in 2045, just after Guatemala was absorbed into Aztlan.

When I was finally able to meet her just a few months ago, I was astonished at how incomplete Rosa's stories about her were. I drunkenly stumbled into the mountainous Seelie Court chapel one night, after drinking far too much of a marvelous Seelie liquor. The Lady stood, mostly unclothed except for a headdress and ceremonial garments, conducting a ceremony that looked familiar to me. I stood back, with my mouth hanging open, only later imagining how stupid I must have looked. The sisters there weren't paying attention to her beauty, but I couldn't help it. I've never been into Anglo girls, but even in Guatemala, pecan skin never looked so radiant. I still can't remember if her hair was black or blue, but it radiated as well, swirling all about her headdress as she waltzed effortlessly through the ritual. There was a soft thumping coming from all around her that added rhythm to her soft voice, which chanted without pause. When she scanned the room, apparently looking for someone, her eyes met mine, and she smiled. She was so beautiful I feel sick to think about it now, given I haven't seen her since.

- Anyone want to tell me why we care about this guy's infatuation with some Seelie tart?
- Clockwork

- If you read between the lines, you'll see why. He was being glamoured.
- Elijah

After the ceremony, she met me by the altar of Itzamna and told me of a job I was going to do for her. I don't remember being given a choice, but I don't remember wanting anything more than to do what she asked. After laying her hand on me and speaking some words that sounded like my Abuela's singing, she left me. When I had finished the job, I returned to one of the sisters named Verda, who gave me the promised payment and offered more errands if I was interested.

As the head of the recently recognized High Priestess faction of the Court, Lady Xoc spends much of her time performing ceremony and ritual. I could never find out what the purpose was for these, but the discussion around the Court was almost always suspicious.

My blunder-filled behavior led to those outside the High Priestess faction being unwelcome to attend. My missteps were made all the more embarrassing when I realized that the High Priestess faction only allows females to attend their ceremonies. It speaks to the grace of Lady Xoc that she spoke kindly and did not shame me because of my actions.

- Shame and honor, far more than laws or notions of morality, govern the interactions among the Seelie Court. This sort of forgiveness isn't given lightly. Either Lady Xoc is brushing aside Court politics, or she was seriously snowing Uncle Rabbit.
- Thorn

I took a few more runs for the faction, but I started wondering why I wasn't interacting with Lady Xoc as I did the first time. Verda told me that Lady Xoc doesn't often meet with commoners, and that I should feel grateful I met her at all. I've since learned that Lady Xoc is indeed secretive and only attends the most exclusive Court functions, relying on her sisters for more mundane interactions.

That's when I stopped the runs. I needed to get back home where things made more sense, and I couldn't bear being around the High Priestess faction and not seeing her. It was consuming my thoughts. I've been having dreams lately, though. Dreams of the Lady, of feathered serpents, sacrifices, and of power.

- Since the High Priestess faction went public recently, Lady Xoc has shot up in social standing within the Court. She had always been well respected, if not completely trusted, but now it seems everyone wants to be next to her. As Rabbit noted, she does indeed have the sight, and Ghost knows how valuable that is to the fae.
- Arete

- More importantly, she is gathering allies now and actively recruiting. Awakened females are especially welcome, but as Rabbit noted, there are always jobs to be done and intrigue to participate in, no matter what your gender or magical inclination.
- Frosty

LORD GWYN

EOLAÍ OF THE UNSEELIE COURT

POSTED BY: ROSE RED

There's a drek-ton of misinformation and confusion surrounding the Unseelie Court, especially if you ask the "decent" fairy folk. Among the Seelie, the Unseelie are blamed for everything from too much rain to not enough. Every time a fae is murdered, the boogie men of the Unseelie Court are the first suspects. The ridiculous factions within the Court use the label of "Unseelie" to discredit and shame each other without the slightest evidence. Rumors go on forever, and no one checks to

see if they are true because they have more important tasks like sipping laés and ruining mortal lives.

- They aren't rumors if they are true.
- Laedian Waiting

So here is some solid info on the Unseelie. I normally wouldn't out allies, but I see which way the wind is blowing, and if the lies keep getting spread, some friends might get hurt. So here is some information on Lord Gwyn, the Eolaí of the Unseelie Court. First, "Lord" is a joke. The Unseelie haven't had a true lord since some long-forgotten conflict between the two courts. Once the final split between the two was complete (including a split from the faerie plane itself), the Unseelie have defined themselves over and against the Seelie. The Seelie have hierarchy. The Unseelie don't. That isn't to say they don't have leadership, though. That is where Gwyn comes in. Gwyn was some kind of ancient hero to the Unseelie. He has been around thousands of years and leads by example. Over time, they recognized him as the strongest and wisest among them and gave him the title Eolaí, or guide. They call him Lord to be ironic and to mock the Seelie. But no Unseelie I have ever met bows to or fears Gwyn. They all just respect him enough to hang on his every word.

- This doesn't match with my intel. Very reliable colleagues of mine paint an entirely different picture of the Unseelie, more closely matching how the Seelie describe them. I am being told that this Lord Gwyn is definitely not their leader. The Unseelie already have a Queen, every bit as dark as Brane is fair. And they supposedly terrorize and instill fear wherever they go.
- Elijah

- I've never known Rose's information to be false. And don't you remember how the Unseelie helped start the revolution against the princes in Tír Tairngire back in the '60s? Those aren't boogeymen. They're old-school anarchists. Real old. Like ancient school.
- Old Crow

- This is what I was afraid of. Everything's about fraggin' anarchy with you, even fairies.
- Bull

Rumors about Gwyn's identity range from the mundane to the downright bizarre. He is clearly not an elf, but he has lived quite a long time. He appears to be human, which give some flight to rumors that he was a mortal hero in another age. Some say he was born of giants, and others that he fought them. Outside of the Unseelie, those that speak of him usually consider him evil or tyrannical. This description suits him fine, as it distracts outsiders from interfering with the long-term mission: to end the Seelie's oppression, influence, and arrogant manipulations.

Physically, Gwyn is a large, human-looking male. His hair is usually red or blonde, though I've heard others say black. And he is old. Which brings me to this next bit.

Gwyn may be dying. As such, it appears he has been looking for someone to replace him as the Eolaí. Unseelie lifespans are far less than most fae, so accumulating as much wisdom or strength as Gwyn in that relatively short time is nearly impossible. Gwyn also fears what will become of an Unseelie Court with no one to guide it. With the Seelie's unfounded beliefs about the Unseelie, a meeting of the two could break out into another prolonged war, which the Unseelie would be ill-equipped to win.

Recently, however, it seems Gwyn believes he has found a worthy replacement. He has been calling her his "Ebon Queen," once again mocking the Seelie Court. Whoever this Ebon Queen is, Gwyn is spending much of his significant social capital with the Unseelie to find her. After sending numerous groups into a sort of shadow realm, Gwyn is no longer putting Unseelie lives at risk. That is why this concerns us.

Gwyn is hiring. The Unseelie Court may have a bad reputation, but they aren't without resources. He wants to find his Queen, and if you aren't skittish about metaplanar work, Gwyn pays good money, and the jobs are straightforward. He's never screwed me the way an earthbound Mr. Johnson has, and you'll meet some good people working for him, too. Pukwudgies, bogies, bogles, baobhan sith, boggarts, buttery spirits, lubbers and fomorians, and even some elves. To find Gwyn, head off Scotland's West Coast. Bring something strong to drink and shout curses at the Seelie. The Unseelie will find you. That, or talk to Green Pixie, Poguer, Unseelie Dan, or Archbishop Timothy Stemple.

- No way. Bishop Stemple from Bavaria? What does he have to do with the Unseelie?
- Winterhawk

- That cat was coming out of the bag eventually.
- Thorn

- I'm not sure what specific metaplane Gwyn is investigating, but if it's the Shadowplane I'm thinking of, I can guess why no one is coming back. There are places beyond our world where mortals simply cannot survive, let alone rescue someone else.
- Red

- There are worlds where the Shadows reign but do not abide. If the Ebon Queen is on one of these, not all hope is lost.
- Man-of-Many-Names

MARA ARIEL

FREELANCE OPERATIVE

POSTED BY: GOAT FOOT

Some of you were wondering what happened to Aufheben. Well, Mara was the last person to see him alive. Since that time, she has been taking on some interesting jobs. I initially distrusted her, as I am no fan of her former employers, but she has proven herself honorable. She is still in denial about being in the shadows, so she won't see this, but what she is doing is relevant to the Tarot.

I don't know much about her before she hooked up with Aufheben. And yes, I mean "hooked up" in more than one sense. They were punk kids in Berlin back in the anarchist heyday. Auf bought in wholeheartedly, while Mara was more like window dressing, just trying to survive. At a certain point, Aufheben left to go fight the good anarchist fight and left Mara behind.

Looking for purpose, Mara eventually hooked up with Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad. Her adept abilities made her an invaluable asset. My intel is fuzzy on the when, but sometime between Berlin and Mossad, she picked up a Lion mentor spirit. Although she rarely talks about it, it's obvious in pictures of her fights, when her totemic mask expresses itself.

Aufheben and Mara met up once again last year. They planned an assassination against several key Arabian Caliphate leaders at the Burj Khalifa, but something went wrong. That's how Aufheben died.

- I was there, too. That was the last time I let myself underestimate Global Sandstorm's Matrix Security. I'd be dead if Mara hadn't taken me out of there.
- Jinn

After Aufheben's death, Mara left Mossad for unknown reasons. She spent six months off the grid before showing back up as a mercenary. She wasn't in it for the money though, if my read was correct. She was learning the biz. A short time ago, she ran across something that changed her course once again. On a mission in Italy, Mara was stopped by a random fortune teller. They're a dime a dozen in Rome, and most of them aren't Awakened or anything, just small-time grifters trying to get a few nuyen out of tourists. But one of them wasn't a con artist. She grabbed Mara's arm and pulled her into an alley, shoving a Tarot card in her face. The lady was lucky Mara didn't eviscerate her, but thankfully, she looked first at the card. It was the card of Discipline from an old Tarot deck. The woman stopped Mara and gave her the card because the image on the card was a spitting image of Mara, albeit wearing a style of clothing that she hadn't worn since Berlin. The card had her own sword on it, and a Lion spirit rested on her lap.

- This can't be coincidence. I believe I mentioned in the *Cutting Aces* upload that I saw Aufheben on the Hanged Man card, and now his partner on that same job appears on another card? Some reports placed the great dragon Aden at the Burj Khalifa just after the failed assassination. I wonder if the dragon is on a card as well.
- Arete

- It certainly looks like it.
- Am-mut

Confused, Mara threatened the old woman, convinced it was a trap. But the woman explained that she just happened to be doing a reading as Mara walked by and her face appeared on the card. Mara took the card and left the job undone.

Since then, she has been a world traveler, taking mercenary and espionage jobs that took her to a different city each time. She has been learning languages like a statesman, and a few anarchist cells report that she did some jobs for them pro bono. She doesn't seem like a neo-a type to me, but I could be wrong.

What I do know is that she has a fire in her belly about becoming ... something. And questions about the Tarot are front and center in her mind. She only takes solo jobs and has commented at least once that she doesn't want to be responsible for anyone else. It is likely that she is one of the most able and thorough operatives in the biz. What significance she has in the Tarot and why her face in on a card, I have no idea. But if you see her, you are probably already regretting it.

- Mara has been asking around about something called the Net of Marduk. I've never heard of it myself, but multiple sources say she's throwing around good nuyen for leads.
- Axis Mundi

- Like the net Marduk used to defeat Tiamat in Babylonian legends? Can't be real.
- Snopes

- Whether it is real or not, this is not a subject healthy to pursue.
- Orange Queen

- Look at what you've done. Now you won't be able to stop them from talking about it.
- Cayman

THE ARCANE THREE

BLACK STAR, ASSOCIATION OF AWAKENED ANARCHISTS

POSTED BY: LOTHAN THE WISE

Things in Chicago never stay the same. The corps are coming back in with lots of nuyen and an itch to spend

it. For a blessed generation, there was no law in the Chicago Sprawl, just whatever kind of life you could make for yourself. But during that time, there was Black Star. This anarchist outfit would help the little guy stand against the big guy. Or help the poor street people not get dozed by Chicago's million gangs.

But things dried up not too long ago. Word was that Black Star was shut down. Chicago missed them probably more than most, but gone is gone. This offshoot of Black Star, though, the Association of Awakened Anarchists? They stuck around a bit. In particular, there were three of them that continued to help folks in the Containment Zone. We called them the Arcane Three, and they stayed in Bug City right up until a few years ago, when the corps moved back in with a vengeance.

I know some of you are already asking what the point of this entry is. Well, I'm here to tell you. I just found out what the Arcane Three have been doing since they left, and I think it's related to this Tarot crap. The Three are hiring themselves out almost nonstop for Tarot-related jobs, so if you find yourself doing Tarot-runs, you may find yourself in competition with them.

- Frag. If the Arcane Three are hunting down cards, that makes me wanna stay out of the whole thing.
- Ecotope

It matters because the Arcane Three have the knowledge and skillsets to track down these Tarot cards with alarming accuracy. Back when I knew them, they were highly talented, but they've taken it to another level. They must have received some serious training in the meantime.

The first of the three, Kangee Cikala, is a dwarf shaman from the Sioux Nation. Never seen her cast a spell, but she can summon spirits like she was born to it. The bond she has with spirits helps her examine the mundane world like one big crime scene. She uses the spirits like precision tools and then pops out of her trance with an answer. It's a bit unsettling to watch.

The human Irishman is Caróg Bheag. He holds no love for the fae or the Tírs, but he can sure fake it when on the job. He's a mage from a tradition I'm not familiar with, but it works just fine. Caróg might be one of the most efficient mages I know of, myself excluded. He may not be the most powerful, but Caróg is extremely creative in his application of carefully selected spells, and as a result, he often delivers surprisingly beneficial results.

The final of the three is Kogarasu Maru, a Japanese elf physical adept. Maru's skillset lends itself to infiltration and spy-craft. He practices ninjutsu, or something like it, although he has no ties to Japanese crime, at least not anymore. He is deadly when he needs to be, but he doesn't do assassination. Believe me, I've tried to hire him. He rarely uses any kind of sword as he thinks it makes things too easy. I personally think it is because he doesn't care for killing, although I have heard others say it is because he likes it too much. He carries a sword with him, a tachi, but he always keeps it slung. And I've never seen him draw it.

- Hah! For a while there, Lothan was so scared of this toxic shaman called the Founder that he must have tried to hire every runner in Chicago to geek him. Some runners ended up doing the favor for him on an unrelated job.
- Matt Wrath

- Scared isn't the right word. I was just busy, you imbecile.
- Lothan The Wise

The Arcane Three seem to be collecting data about the Tarot rather than collecting the cards themselves. Since they've been taking mercenary jobs, it makes me wonder just how connected they remain to Black Star, if at all. If someone else can explain to me how the Tarot qualifies as working for the people, I'd love to hear it. Further, I've seen some Black Star activity start back up in Chicago, but as far as I know, the Arcane Three haven't been back here since they left.

- I can attest that they are still part of the Association of Awakened Anarchists. Or at least they were as of our last meeting in January. But their involvement in this Tarot biz was all news to me.
- Ziggy

- You know, at first, when you described a group of highly trained operatives hunting for Tarot cards, I thought you were talking about some people I ran into on our last run. My team and I were extracting a wageslave from a Horizon satellite campus in Las Vegas. As we were hopping into the van, these guys in black-and-tan robes started using some spell I've never seen to choke everyone. I was cleaning up the Matrix behind us, so I hadn't caught up yet, but I saw the whole thing using a security camera. After they killed my entire team plus the mark, they grabbed a card out of the mark's pocket and left. I've been scanning the Matrix for anything related, and I thought these guys sounded like a possibility. But the Arcane Three don't sound like stone killers.
- Electric UTE

- Boy, am I glad I wasn't the only one. I caught a glimpse of those same fraggers in black-and-tan robes. If I'm not mistaken, they had armor underneath as well. They tore up my chummer and his team, too. He linked me to his feed just before he checked out permanently.
- Fusion

- I, too, can confirm the activity of this secret cabal seeking the Tarot. If you see them, run. A job is just nuyen. Your life is not as easy to replace.
- Lei Kung

LA PANTERA

VENGEANCE IN TENOCHTITLÁN

POSTED BY: LOST CITY LANCERO

Okay, since we're talking about the Tarot, check this out. Mi hermano, Hablo Picasso, and me was casing a Stuffer Shack in Tenochtitlán back in October. Mago Mucho was in the back, doing his normal deck reading like he does every time before a heist.

- Frag me. Who let in the heavy hitters? Stuffer Shack, you say? Was the Porkly Workly too far a walk?
- T Cruz Crazy

- Yeah. When we've heard of *you*, then you can talk.
- Netcat

He drew a quick three-card reading, because we were running low on time, and to be honest, I can't even remember what the first two were, because the third card, our future, was the Knight of Blades. A card I hadn't seen Mago draw before, or at least it didn't look familiar. It was this biker chica, wearing black and blue, holding a bloody blade, sitting all sexy on a dope bike. Mago started to make something up about what that card meant for our future when it became crystal. The chica from the card zoomed past us on that same bike from the card. Mago's way superstitious so he made us ditch the Stuffer Shack job and follow the Knight of Blades.

- Fascinating. A similar picture, if not the same exact image, appeared on my deck of arcana as well. I'll upload the image.
- **Upload Complete—Knight_Of_Blades—Uploaded—**
- Arete

- That's La Pantera? Looks just like Mongoose, a razorgirl in Seattle. I wonder how the Quick Slivers are gonna feel, seeing someone else copping their color scheme?
- Hard Exit

She didn't seem to care that she was being followed, so we drove through most of Tenochtitlán until we got close to the old Universal Omnitech building. When she slowed down, we stayed back a bit to see what would happen. The next part was a blur, but before we knew what was happening, la chica was ambushed. Bullets were flying everywhere as these corpse fraggers were gunning for the chica. But she wasn't having it. She kicked all their asses with just her sword—like, twenty dudes went down. After, she just hops back on the bike and heads back toward the Pyramid.

Mago couldn't let it go, so we tailed her from a distance. When she stopped the bike and went inside a house on Calle Caballero, I had a good idea about who

she was. This chica grew up in my hood. Her family was poor, like everyone else on Caballero, but her dad was a cool dude. He was like a dad for all the kids that didn't have one. He made us tamales in Diciembre, helped us pimp our breathing masks, and had this big tattoo of a Panther on his chest. Cool as hell. This one time, though, Azzie corpsec comes knocking on the house and dragged the dad out onto the street and beat him hardcore because he wouldn't give up some names or something. Turns out, he didn't even know the names they wanted, and they got called to another side of town. When they left, Papa Caballero was dead, and the chica went loco and had to move in with her grandma down south.

Then we saw her again outside the Stuffer Shack. After that, we started hearing everyone talking about her in the hood. They called her La Pantera. She was cruising all the hoods around Calle Caballero and taking out the trash, so they say. Hablo, Mago, and me decided to lay low and not take some jobs because we heard La Pantera was cracking down on gangers, dealers and rapers, and we didn't want to get caught anywhere near it. But after the hood started getting safer, La Pantera started doing crime herself. At first, it started out like little pranks at companies owned by Aztechnology (which in Tenochtitlán is almost all of 'em). Then she started going on runs against Aztechnology labs and NatVat warehouses. That's when Azzie corpsec started hunting her.

- Life ain't easy when you're runnin' from a megacorp.
- PuttDawg

- She don't seem too worried. But I bet there's a bunch of Azzie drones that piss themselves whenever they get the call to go after the great and powerful La Pantera.
- Kane

Thing is, I've never seen her get taken down. No matter how many they throw at her, chica just beats them fierce and drives away. Mago says he got a look at her in the astral, and she is definitely missing some flesh. But I've never seen a razorgirl move like her. It's like she was born to do this. She don't come by Caballero no more, though. Heat's too hot, they say. But I still hear about her all the time. Different parts of Tenochtitlán, everyone saying "La Pantera es una puta," "Kill La Pantera," and "La Pantera is a menace." But that's just corp propaganda. The streets love La Pantera. Unless you're a corpsucker or hurting the people, La Pantera es la major.

JOSEPH MNGUNI

(1247) IZOLO INC.

POSTED BY: DEVIL CLOUD

"Do not cross Joseph Mnguni." That is what I heard from every single reference I spoke to before doing a deal with Izolo Inc. Of course, Mr. Johnson needed the rare-earth minerals asap, and the only seller was Izolo. So I had no choice. The odd thing is, I can't tell if Mnguni was just an extremely well-respected pawn in the company or something closer to the top. To see him in action—this peculiar Zulu elf with blue facial hair—you'd think he ran the entire show in New Hlobane.

- That's New Hlobane, capitol of the Zulu Nation, in the Azanian Confederation, covering most of the southern part of the African continent, for those geographically challenged.
- MadagascarTree

If he is a mover and shaker, as his demeanor suggests, I can't figure out why he insists on negotiating and micromanaging even the smallest business deals. I mean, he knew he was dealing with a runner, and he still met with me personally to discuss biz. He wasn't the warmest elf I ever dealt with, but he wasn't a drekhole either. All he wanted in return for the goods was that me and the girls break into a museum in Cape Town and steal some ancient card from their archive room. This guy must have been a spike baby or something, because when we pulled the heist and grabbed the card (which I now know is the King of Cups Tarot card, thanks to post-run research), Mnguni's face was on it. He seemed genuinely pleased by our interaction, and he asked me to take a long, hard look at the card, encouraging me to memorize its details. Then he gave me his card (which just read "Joseph Mnguni, Izolo Inc." with a commcode), looked at me with his one flesh eye (the other socket had some kind of glowing blue cybereye), and convinced me to call him if I ever see anything remotely resembling the card we retrieved.

- For the youth among us, a "spike baby" is a term used to refer to elves or dwarfs who were born before the Awakening. Sometimes the mana would spike during the Fifth World and allow those with metahuman genes to show their true colors before 2012. Ork and troll spike babies might have been possible, but I never heard of any. Plus, they'd all be dead now, unlike the elves and dwarfs who live much longer.
- Picador

Afterwards, I did some digging on Joseph, because something wasn't adding up for me.

- Yeah, like why would a grunt hold so much sway in one of the most elitist cities in the world? Or if he wasn't a grunt, what is the leadership of Izolo Inc. doing negotiating deals and meeting with shadowrunners instead of sending a typical corp Johnson?
- Slamm-0!

- Agreed. Plus, negotiating with the big bosses brings unwanted challenges and complications to a job.
- Mr. Pink

I couldn't find a birth record, which made me think that my spike-baby idea was on point. Izolo keeps its shareholders and personnel records private, so I couldn't confirm his place in the company, but I was able to place him at a dozen recent meetings with runners and twice as many meetings with foreign ambassadors and megacorp CEOs. So this guy definitely isn't a grunt. I had to really press hard—and spend a fair amount of nuyen—to get some of those runners to open up about the jobs they did for Mnguni. Once they did, I started seeing the pattern. He wasn't just meeting with random shadowrunners to benefit Izolo. In each case where he met with deniable assets, he was trying to track down one of these cards. It seems we were the second team sent to grab the King of Cups. The first team was captured, and before they could snitch, the team started bleeding out of their eyes and nose. They all dropped dead in a Cape Town police station. Another team, Calamity Services, got a job from Joseph to track down the Four of Cups. Once they grabbed it, they got a better offer and decided to bail on Mnguni. Every single runner that worked for Calamity Services, along with their families, and at least one contact, turned up drowned in an aquarium in Johannesburg.

- No kidding? I kept trying to get ahold of Big Jake from Calamity a few weeks ago. Now I know why he didn't answer. This Mnguni guy seems wicked—why is anyone doing biz with him?
- Fragmire

- That's just it. You'd think they wouldn't, but there is a whole other side to the guy. Read on.
- Devil Cloud

I was ready to bolt when I heard those stories, but call me a glutton for punishment—I kept asking around. Turns out those guys were the exceptions. Most people who worked for Mnguni had stellar things to say. Sure, they gave me the same warnings about crossing him, but they also told me how after the jobs, they would be shopping in New Hlobane, and people would smile and give them discounts, saying things like, "Any friend of Joseph's ..." or "Thanks for helping out Mr. Mnguni, this one's on the house." Runners' kids getting free surgeries, memorial funds set up for companions lost on the job, real humanitarian drek. So yeah, if you crossed him, you died, but if you showed the smallest respect and did even a small job for the man, he paid you back in spades.

Since there seemed to be no shortage of runners who had the same story, I hit the working slags of New Hlobane to ask about Mnguni. Once again, same story. People knew not to cross him, but they weren't afraid of him, either. He was like some kinda folk hero. And everyone had a story about being helped by the guy. It struck me odd that no one could, or was willing to, tell me what he did at Izolo, even though it was clear they held Izolo in the same high regard. Also, it doesn't hurt that Joseph can work a crowd like no one I've ever met. The masses fawn all over him.

- It's no joke. When Johnny Spinrad arrived in Azania last month, he went straight to meet with Mnguni. Johnny was trying to loop Izolo into his fledgling alliance with Middle Eastern and African corps. A trid recording of that meeting (don't ask how I got it) shows a pleasant and riveting conversation between two masters of the trade. At the end of that discussion, however, it was Spinrad who left with his ego bruised, but the representative of A-rated Izolo was smiling.
- Traveler Jones

So, the straight talk is this: Joseph is something like a Mafia boss down here. He does what he wants, and people look up to him and fear him in equal measure. He makes sure things get done, and he has his hands in almost every cookie jar. Unlike the Mafia, his operations seem completely above board, legally speaking. If he has bosses, I'd hate to run across them. If he doesn't, I don't know how he keeps it all spinning. But if you come across Tarot cards with even the smallest astral signature, take 'em to Joseph. He's paying the most for them in the current market, and it may benefit you to get on his good side.

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TACO TEMPLE

POSTED BY: COSMO

Ah, Taco Temple. Who doesn't love it, right? The Fireball Burrito. The Smoke Jaguar Chalupa with Dragon's Breath Salsa. The addicting Chipotle Lime Chips. All washed down, of course, with the famous Really Big Drink. When you're up past two a.m.—and who isn't?—your thoughts turn to Taco Temple almost automatically. Something about that deep-night darkness and the scattered glow of sprawl lights just naturally goes with burritos. It's a natural craving, because Taco Temple has been part of so many late nights, from stakeouts in the barrens to quick runs made during endless high-school evenings. Whenever you've needed it, it's been there, open all the time, its friendly yellow, green, and red glow waiting to welcome you.

Except that's a lie. The paperwork is available for anyone who wants to research it. There are currently 12,000 Taco Temple locations worldwide. Last year, there were 7,000. The year before that, 1,500. The year before that? Two. And those two were in their first year of operation. This is not just unprecedented growth. It's impossible. If a franchise adds a few hundred locations annually, it's doing very well. But adding 5,000 in a single year? The logistics are completely impossible. You simply cannot ramp up your supply chain fast enough, or find enough quality personnel. Just try hiring five thousand high-quality managers annually. They don't grow on trees.

But these are the numbers we have, and the only reason I have to disbelieve them is my own memory. I went to Taco Temple back in my corp drone days, didn't I? I think I did. It feels like I did. I can think about eating a Fireball Burrito with a definite fondness. But when I try to picture the places I went, when I try to situate them in the sprawls where I was living, I can't. I mean, I picture an individual restaurant in my mind—who can't?—but I can't picture what neighborhood it's in, what buildings were around it. My mind wants to convince me that this chain has always been part of my life, but it can't provide all the evidence needed to convince me. Something is off.

- This is nonsense. I had Taco Temple all the time growing up. Half the time my dad bothered to show up, it was with a Taco Temple bag in hand.
- Sounder

- Right. I'll bet that's something you looked forward to.
- Elijah

- Of course! What kid doesn't like fast food night? That's why he did it—butter us up a little, make us feel good that he was there.
- Sounder

- Sounds like it worked. What would he bring you? What was your favorite?
- Elijah

- Always plenty of chips and salsa, of course, but he'd always wait and pull out my favorite at the end, pretending he didn't have it, but then at the last minute show me that he'd gotten one of those things.
- Sounder

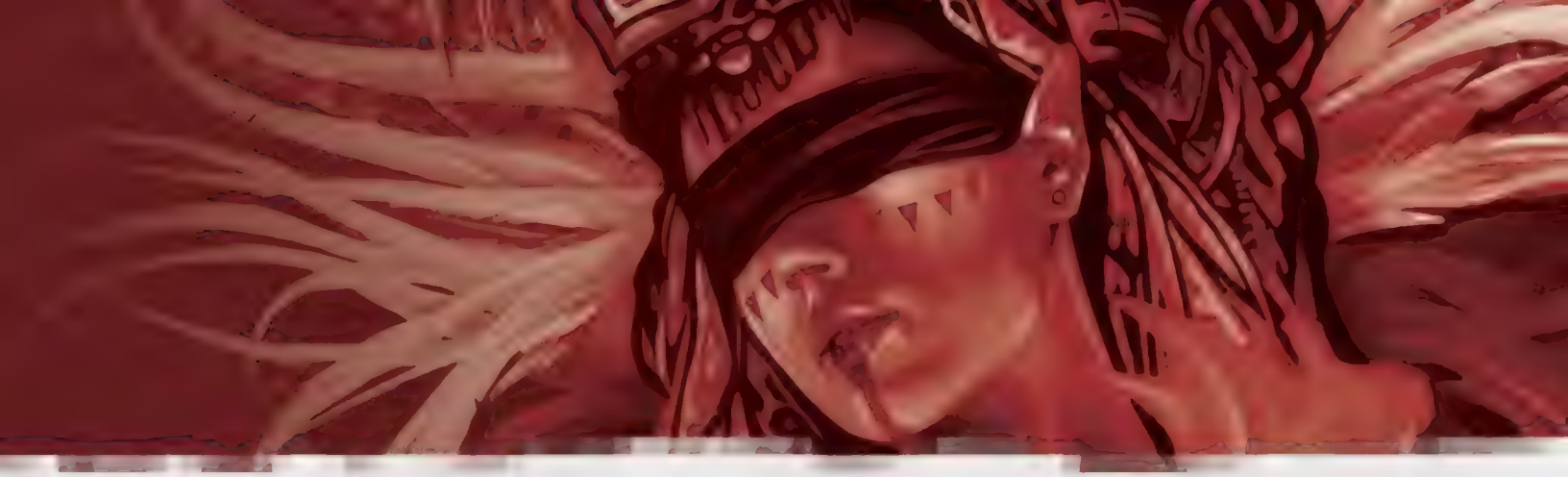
- Which things?
- Elijah

- The things I liked! My favorite! It was ...
- Sounder

- ...
- Sounder

- Motherfucker.
- Sounder

We had three years of explosive Taco Temple growth. Anyone want to guess how long its been since the Sixth World Tarot started getting regular mentions in the shadows? Yep, three years. And yeah, I know, correlation does not imply causation, but then we started getting a look at some of the cards, and I'll be damned if Taco Temple does not keep showing up. On the Five of Coins, its logo is part of a giant billboard in Piccadilly Circus. On the Knight of Blades, the logo is an ARO in the background bearing witness to the grisly killing of a hapless victim by a helmeted woman on a motorcycle. And in the Six of Cups, children pass a series of Really Big Drinks to another child in the sewers. And that's not even the half of it.



What does it all mean? It's tough to say it means anything. Most of the time the logo appears in the cards, it's in the background. It's window-dressing, something not integral to the whole image. It could be any restaurant, really.

But it still nags at you. If it could be any restaurant, why does it keep being Taco Temple? Why does it show up so much more than anything else? And is its rapid expansion tied to its appearance? These are all good questions.

Besides the number of locations figures I mentioned above, few solid facts are known about the franchise. Most people assume it's an Aztechnology subsidiary, and some variants of the logo that include the words "Another great restaurant from Aztechnology" have been spotted. But behind-the-scenes observers have found few significant connections between Aztechnology's traditional supply chain and Taco Temple's operations. And other information is difficult to find, since Aztechnology remains a private corporation, meaning it only has to reveal as much information as it damn well pleases. And generally that isn't much. It may well, in fact, be an Aztechnology subsidiary, but clear evidence is not there. Which just deepens the mystery.

So what, exactly, is this chain? Here are the leading theories:

IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A RESTAURANT

As you should know, shadowrunners can be a little paranoid. We've uncovered so many secrets, been the victim of so many underhanded schemes, that we assume there is always something happening just out of our sight. But sometimes, a cigar is just a cigar. Did Taco Temple expand with amazing speed? Yes, but that was nothing more than some loaded investors having faith in what has proven to be a very bankable concept. They acted with business savvy while appealing to a certain nostalgia in all of us. And the appearances on the Sixth World Tarot? Nothing extraordinary—the cards reflect our world, and what these days is more Sixth World than Taco Temple?

This theory has the reassuring cant of reason, but it also leaves a few questions unanswered while giving weak responses to others. Still, I can see the appeal of it.

- There is always an appeal to hiding from rather than confronting discomfiting truths.
- Man-of-Many-Names

IT IS A VEHICLE FOR CARD COLLECTORS

This theory posits that the emergence of Taco Temple in parallel with the Tarot was no coincidence, and the savvy investors who launched the franchise's rapid spread were actually some of the world's wealthiest and most powerful mages who were using the restaurants as field offices in their efforts to find Tarot cards. Essentially they now have twelve thousand field offices for gathering information about cards and gathering them if they have a chance. Plus, they can keep themselves well fed as they go out searching. The mechanics of the mages' involvement in the expansion and the resources they have at their disposal is unclear, and it remains an open question of whether opening a chain of taco stands is the most effective way to accomplish what they want done. But the magic angle fills in some of the holes left by other explanations.

- The social adepts and mind-control mages who could pull this off would be a scary bunch indeed.
- Elijah

IT IS A PHENOMENON WITH A MYSTICAL BUT OBSCURE CONNECTION TO THE SIXTH WORLD TAROT

As Man-of-Many-Names has repeatedly pointed out, anyone who says they completely understand the flow of mana across the world—how affecting it in one spot may make change in another spot—is lying. There are certain things that work according to expectations and predictions, but even within those rather predictable areas, there are anomalies. Similar emotionally devastating events may both affect the surrounding

manasphere, but the size and degree of the effect varies. And then ancillary effects may differ.

Keep in mind that I'm a layman when it comes to these things, so none of them reflect personal observations or experiences. This is just what I've heard from people I trust.

Consider two examples surrounding murders performed by the so-called Mealtime Killer (or one of the copycats). One was in Dallas, the other was in New Orleans. Both involved men who were married and had two children. Their families were away at the time, and they returned home to a horrible sight, the evidence that the killer had done their work. In both cases, the manasphere around the homes took a hit, weakened by the emotional turmoil that hit the home. But in Dallas, the background count barely extended beyond the edges of the house. In the other case, the background count affected the entire surrounding block. The larger one was also more intense, making some mages who entered its boundaries physically nauseous. Not long after the New Orleans killing, about fifteen kilometers away, a portion of Bayou Sauvage with a radius of about three hundred meters started growing several black mana orchids, which previously had not been seen in the wild within a thousand kilometers of New Orleans. Further investigation showed that the likely cause of the sudden growth was a mana surge in that part of the bayou. Was it connected to the appearance of the background count tied to the Mealtime Killer? Some say the timing is notable, though again, correlation does not imply causation. The size of the two areas are similar, but still, that's almost entirely circumstantial. Some experts believe the two things are connected; other experts believe those first experts are crazy.

- Much of our difficulty comes from our lack of understanding of the nature of mana. Is it of a strictly limited supply? Does it behave like a solid, liquid, or gas in terms of how it might fill a void? Or is it entirely its own thing, and our physics-bound models are useless?
- Lyran

- I assume by now that my answer to that last question is well known.
- Man-of-Many-Names

This is a long way of saying that when there is a disruption of some sort in the manasphere, many scholars believe that there is a Newtonian equal and opposite reaction at some other spot. Taco Temple could be the result of such a shift

How does a shift in a manasphere result in a series of taco franchises springing up almost overnight? As it turns out, there are numerous possibilities. One is that a certain strain of divination becomes enhanced, giving business-inclined augurs the type of knowledge that al-

lows them to take risks and make decisions that no sane entrepreneur would ever make. Another possibility is that rather than enhancing the ability of a businessperson to make the chain come to life, the manasphere did all the work by itself. Any high-priced construction company can tell you the value a mage can have in the construction practice (when they deign to do such common work, of course), and wild fluctuations of mana have been shown to, completely on their own, build stacks of stones or logs. That is a significant distance from building a functioning restaurant, but it at least demonstrates the possibilities that mana energies present to those willing to take advantage of them. Does it stretch credulity to think such opportunities would present themselves in thousands of locations across the globe? Very much so. But everything about the Sixth World Tarot pushes the limits of beliefs, so what's one more thing?

And the cause-and-effect relationship between mana fluctuations and the existence of Taco Temple does not need to be as direct as these examples. There may be several steps between what happens in the manasphere and how Taco Temple emerges; the effort to untangle those webs has fueled several divisions of the Draco Foundation, as well as countless dorm-room conversations at MIT&T.

WHAT IT MEANS

So those are some possible explanations of how the emergence of Taco Temple is tied into the Tarot, but no matter how many arguments we have over those connections, the Temple remains there, in the cards, providing information in the ways that the tarot cards provide any information—loosely, obliquely, and in designs we will very possibly only understand when it is too late. But if we don't understand, it's not for a lack of trying, so here are some efforts I've heard to build a narrative and make sense of the weird and the random.

AID TO THOSE IN NEED

At least three of the seven cards displaying Taco Temple in some way depict people in need. On the Six of Cups, two young girls are passing Taco Temple drinks to a third child reaching out from under a manhole cover. On the Six of Coins, an executive passes clothing to some bedraggled children. On the Five of Coins, a dirt-smudged girl sits on a suitcase in a public square, collecting coins in a cap with an alarming bloody handprint on it (while a brawl rages in the background). A person dressed in a taco costume—presumably the mascot of Taco Temple, which is lavishly advertised in the square—approaches the girl. Observers have found a common thread here in that those in need of help can get it from Taco Temple (though it's not exactly clear that the taco mascot is approaching the kid on the Five of Coins with any intent other than to see if she has earned enough cash to buy herself a taco).

Then the proponents of this theory throw in the Seven of Cups. The central person on this card is not as clearly in need as the children in the other two. She is older, and while she has a bandaged cut on her left wrist, it seems minor and has been cared for. She is wearing the now-popular "Taco Temple Rules Us All" tank top, and she has been pleasantly surprised by an ARO telling her that she has been randomly selected for some sort of prize, represented by a series of chalices. A small logo on the ARO indicates that the award comes from Taco Temple. There are seven of them, with Chinese numerals on them and icons above them that are subject to multiple interpretations and really long arguments on Matrix forums.

- Well, the nuyen symbol is obvious, so that likely means the others represent some sort of prizes. Though the icon on chalice seven is the Draco Foundation, and I have no idea how they would be involved in some sort of giveaway that does not involve a will. In the eternal laws of giveaways, the cash is going to be worth slightly less than the merchandise, but we don't have any real clue how much nuyen is being offered.
- Pistons

- Note that based on her expression and the pink ARO circle that's appeared, she seems to have selected chalice number three, which has the icon of a winged angel. Hell if I know what that's supposed to mean, but she sure seems excited about it.
- Lyran

- In palmistry, having a star on your palm is generally a sign of success or fame (I'm generalizing here, as exact locations matter, but that's the basic stroke), while the laurel wreath is of course a sign of victory. Based on symbology alone, I'd say that chalice looks pretty good. But she didn't pick it.
- Jimmy No

Again, Taco Temple brings rewards. Next we add in the Six of Coins, where an executive is handing clothing to what look like some street urchins. We don't know the executive's affiliation, but a Taco Temple logo lurks subtly in the background, and that's enough to make people connect the dots. Then we throw in the Seven of Blades, where a bag of Taco Temple treats sits on some steps, waiting to provide nourishment to a passing runner. She isn't reaching for it, but it's nice for her to have it when needed. The theme of Taco Temple being there for you returns again.

Maybe Taco Temple has some truly gifted PR flacks who managed to get positive representation of the company on the cards, but that seems unlikely. For whatever reason, the deck seems to like this corp, and those in need might somehow be able to look to it for assistance.

How that assistance will be obtained and what form it will take remains, of course, unclear.

READING THE CARDS

The art of the Sixth World Tarot is so interesting to look at that it can be too easy to forget that it is not a simple collection of art. It is a tarot deck, and ignoring that aspect of it robs the chance to gain certain meanings. Let's look at the seven cards where Taco Temple appears:

- **Seven of Blades:** A dangerous plan, risk, desire
- **Knight of Blades:** Professionalism, skill, bravery, destruction, opposition
- **Five of Coins:** Underprivileged, low, wanting
- **Six of Coins:** Generosity, prosperity, gifts
- **Knight of Coins:** Utility, duty
- **Six of Cups:** Pleasant memories, childhood happiness
- **Seven of Cups:** Premonition, augury, imagination

Take five out of those seven, and you are in solid shadowrunner territory. After all, describing us as underprivileged professionals who are imaginative, risk-taking, and useful is perhaps as accurate a description as I could ever muster. Five of those cards seem to lean hard on the idea that Taco Temple can be a runner haven (which works well with the Taco-Temple-as-benefactor interpretation above). But what the hell are the Six of Cups and Six of Coins doing there? I may have met a runner, once, who had a happy childhood, full of gifts and generosity. So that makes one in a few thousand. If we want the cards to somehow represent shadowrunners, those two just doesn't fit.

So what do we do about that? According to one theory, you discard the shadowrunners theory entirely. It's basic science—if the evidence doesn't fit the theory, the theory is bad. Rather then being about shadow comrades-in-arms, the cards could be delivering the pertinent information about the people behind the Taco Temple. Information about these powers-behind-the-taco-shell is difficult to come by, but the cards may be telling us that they (however many "they"s there may be) started from humble but happy beginnings, used a sense of duty and considerable skills to climb their way up the ladder, and applied their imagination—and perhaps some skilled divination—to build up their empire.

- Other people say all this talk about Taco Temple is meaningless, that it's just coincidental that the logo appears where it does, and attempting to make these sort of connections is an empty practice because there is no inherent meaning in the chain's multiple appearances in the deck. Those people are no fun.
- The Smiling Bandit

Other people insist that two outliers are not enough reason to throw out the whole shadowrunner theory. They say that the "pleasant memories" aspect of the Six of Cups should be the focus instead of the "childhood happiness" aspect. The interpretation, then, becomes simple. Want happy memories (and want to survive long enough to have them)? Then make sure you visit Taco Temple—where you will get the gifts promised by the Six of Coins.

I'll say this, though. If there is a secret network of shadowrunner support starting up through Taco Temple locations worldwide, I have not heard of it. That's not to say it doesn't exist, of course. Lots of things happen in the shadows without many of us hearing about it. But we also tell stories. I would expect that if a chain this large has been sheltering or even actively aiding runners, word would start to trickle out. If I continue to hear nothing? Then I'll think the whole thing is bogus.

- It can't just be that if you're a shadowrunner who walks into a Taco Temple, you'll find help (and a complimentary Really Big Drink). Yeah, word would get out fast, then the crackdown would happen. So the aid needs to be hidden, buried behind code phrases, hidden doors, that sort of thing. The first trick is knowing the possible help exists. The second is finding it.
- Chainmaker

- I am surprised that I have to explain that all the answers are waiting in the cards.
- Man-of-Many-Names

- And of course he won't tell us where.
- Traveler Jones

- Look, we all know that the only people who act like they want to attract shadowrunners are those who want to catch us. This is the colorful flower in the jaws of a Venus flytrap. Stay away.
- Cayman

THE STORY OF THE AVENGING ANGEL

I like this interpretation because of the style and flair it demonstrates. It's quite clear that some of the cards tell a story—the characters that move from the Nine of Coins to the Two of Cups are the best-known example. In that spirit, some observers have taken it to heart to use the Taco Temple logos as a sign that the cards are to be connected narratively (rather than thematically, as noted above), and they have then looked to construct stories from these cards. There are many narratives that have popped up, but the one that has gained the most traction is called the Story of the Avenging Angel, and it goes like this:

FIVE OF COINS

Once there was a girl who was abandoned, left in a busy street with nothing. The people who abandoned her at least had the charity and thoughtfulness to leave her in a public place, where she would be visible to people who might be able to help her. But this is the Sixth World, where there are few people who would bother to extend any compassion, and those who might consider it see all sorts of complications and possible traps if they decide to stick their neck out the slightest bit, so they move on. She does what so many of us have had to do—beg and scrape, find whatever scraps people would give her.

- The true mystery of the picture are the coins in the cap in front of the girl (okay, the bloody handprint is a considerable mystery, too). How did she get coins? Who in London carries pocket change? You could have curly red hair and dimples like meteor craters during the dinner rush hour in Piccadilly Circus, and you'd be lucky to end up with two farthings (because no one actually mints nuyen coins) and a slug. Five coins just wouldn't happen. So where did they come from? Two prevalent theories: 1) The coins are meant as an indicator that this image exists in the past, though this gets confusing when we remember that Taco Temple did not exist in the past beyond a few years ago. The proponents of this theory counter that Taco Temple logos are just meant as a marker to join the images together. 2) The coins are symbolic, representing (meager) wealth, or in some interpretations, the mystical coins of luck—there are five coins in the image and only four coins of luck, but note that only four coins are in the cap. Why, then, would the coins of luck be in the picture? That leads us down a whole new rabbit warren of speculation.
- Kay St. Irregular

The Taco Temple mascot is nearby, though no clear aid is forthcoming from him. Will he help the girl? Or at least watch over her until someone takes care of her? Most versions of the narrative cast him as a distant taco-shaped guardian angel, which of course would not even be close to the weirdest things the world has thrown at us.

This angel does not seem to be much direct help, and the girl looks miserable (though determined). With good reason—most girls of the age depicted on the card would not last long on their own. But this brings us to:

SIX OF CUPS

If there's one truism about the great sprawls of the world, it's that callous heartlessness is not an isolated phenomenon. The child abandoned in the Five of Coins was not the only child left alone in the sprawl, and this one was fortunate to encounter a group of children who understood how to survive in the city. She joins an underground network of kids who can take care of themselves. Living in the sewers is not a comfortable existence, but she survives.

- I just noticed that the same star-on-palm-surrounded-by-laurel-wreaths design from one of the Seven of Cups chalices is on the manhole cover here. Hmmmm.
- Thorn

Taco Temple is a benefactor in this period, but a minor one—no matter how much you may love a Really Big Drink, that huge cup of soda is not going to help anyone move from a life of poverty to a life of comfort. It might ease some of the sting and aid survival, but that's the best that can be hoped for. Except when we look at:

SIX OF COINS

The urchins have moved up from scrounging for themselves to having someone provide things for them, under the gentle glow of a Taco Temple logo. The Temple may be playing a more active role in their care, offering clothing along with food.

Those first connections are easy; the rest of the steps require substantive leaps and conjecture. In the most common version of the story, we move to:

SEVEN OF CUPS

The theory here is that the central woman in this card is the same one as the abandoned child in Five of Coins. To be clear, there are almost no solid connections between the two. Facial resemblance is not strong enough to make it a clear match, and there are no physical markers joining the two together. The main arguments proponents make for putting this card next in the sequence are: 1) It makes a strong continuation of theme of the past two cards; and 2) Numerically, the Seven of Cups comes after the Six of Cups, which is not a trend the rest of the narrative follows, but one they find suitable here. So there we go.

- The palm-and-wreath image spotted by Thorn is another connection between the two. It might be a signal the girl would recognize, or simply something for us viewers to help make connections.
- Plan 9

Anyway, the idea is that the abandoned little girl survived into her late teens, still fond of the Taco Temple food that provided her sustenance in her youth. At this point, she is selected for greater things. The powers behind Taco Temple have decided she is deserving of more, and the wheel-of-fortune-like ARO appears before her, offering her a new future. She selects the chalice with the angel. By some accounts, this is in tribute to

the guardian angel that watched over her during her first days on the streets, by others it is an augur of her destiny (as augury is an important part of the meaning of the Seven of Cups). She has an opportunity for a new life. This new life is shown in:

SEVEN OF BLADES

The woman on this card is not without a resemblance to the woman on the Seven of Cups (numerology fans like to point out that they are both sevens). She has a cybereye now, though, and is armed. She has the poise of someone who is accustomed to watching and being watched. She has evolved—she has not become her final form yet, but she is more dangerous. She is on her way to becoming:

KNIGHT OF BLADES

Our little girl is now all grown up and has directed her survival skills in a violent direction. This is a fearsome, bloody picture, and possibly just exists to help us understand the end result of the long process she went through, and how the intervention of Taco Temple at various parts of her life shaped her into this. But there is one more step:

KNIGHT OF COINS

Those same people who were excited to put the Seven of Cups after the Six of Cups in this narrative are very excited by the fact that these last two cards are knights. That shows that these two cards are two sides of the same coin (one of them is even the Coins suit!). This card can be tricky, as the main focus of the card, the rather plain man motoring along in his small car, is actually the least important part of the picture (in this narrative). What matters is the explosion that is difficult to make out but clearly present.

As with the other cards in this series, the action takes place in an urban center. It's difficult to identify from the images present, as none of the buildings have any characteristics that set them apart. The roadway the small car is driving on is unusual; if you really want to follow discussions trying to pinpoint the location of the card based on that, I invite you to dive into any one of several available Matrix conversations filled with speculation. For my purposes, the exact location does not matter.

The important thing to notice is that everything about the picture makes it seem like a corporate part of town. The bomb, then, is an anti-corporate activity, carried out when people around are clearly unaware and not on any kind of alert. This is the second aspect of the Avenging Angel's activities—she can get up close and personal, as in the Knight of Blades image, or she can carry out larger anti-corporate terrorism. She survived her early trauma and has grown into a true force in the Sixth World. And Taco Temple—whose logo benefi-

cently oversees the detonation of her bomb—is there for every step of her journey, watching over her and occasionally offering direct aid.

That's the basic outline. Now to the questions: Is this story mainly symbolic, or does it represent a specific person? If Taco Temple helps groom anti-corp revolutionaries, how does it select its candidates? And hasn't a corporation with more than twelve thousand locations pretty much joined the ranks of what it is purporting to rebel against? How does a corporation stage an anti-corporate revolution?

These are all fine and worthwhile questions. At the moment, I have no definitive answers.

POWERS BEHIND THE CHALUPA

This theory takes a very different tack from some of the previous ones. Rather than positioning Taco Temple as a friend or booster to runners, it sees it as a threat. Not a special threat, necessarily—sure, people like to play with the old cliché that their soy-based meat substitute is actually made of people, and thanks to Aztechnology and Ares (and, okay, most of the corp world), people love to assume that any large corporation has some nefarious dark magic happening behind closed doors—but at the very least, Taco Temple is a large, fast-growing, secretive corporation, and that's threat enough for many people.

In this theory, the purpose of the cards is to identify the seven secret principal owners of Taco Temple. Keep in mind that no one knows how many owners there truly are, or even what the ownership structure is. But there are seven cards, and people love these games, so they decided there must be seven principal owners, which all seems arbitrary, but also par for the course.

The game in this theory is picking out what clues from the card may provide information about the identity of an owner. This game is played in a far less narrative fashion than the story of the Avenging Angel—people generally do not believe any owner is actually depicted on any card. Instead, the game is to understand the clues and symbols that point out key identifying information. Got it? Let's play.

SIX OF CUPS

The big clue people like to take from this one is the large billboard in the background reading "His wife's gold." While it looks like it might be a theater marquee of some sort, there are no records of any show with that name from any time this century. Thus people have leaped to take it as a clue to the identity of one of the owners. Some take it literally—Esteban Goya, a vice-president-level executive with Aztechnology North America, is married to a woman named Corinne Gold, while Damarcus Kelly, a fast-rising Horizon PR flack, is married to a woman named Goldie Benfort. Others take the words as an allusion to how the owner got the capital to buy into Taco Temple, pointing to people like Danielle de la Mar's new trophy husband Desmond Elm. The Goya theory is bolstered by the inclusion of Chinese restaurant imagery with the Taco Temple items, as Corinne Gold is of Chinese descent. On the other hand, people point out that Damarcus Kelly and Goldie Benfort have three children, matching the number depicted on the card. To some, the H on the manhole cover points others to none other than Saeder-Krupp's Hans Brackhaus, since he seems to be the right combination of lucky and frequently victorious. And we're only scratching the surface.

SEVEN OF CUPS

Theories about this card are all about the Draco Foundation, thanks to the logo on the wheel of fortune. Draco Foundation Director of Reagent Research Yvette Desjardins is a troll, so people believe the troll skull points to her (or to her looming death—these discussions get really wide ranging). The leafless tree represents some sort of reagent-producing item she would pursue, and the statue (this is a bit of a stretch) represents something you would find in a garden ("Desjardins" translates to "of the gardens").

- Note that as director of research, Desjardins is one of the more active card hunters out there, so it would be interesting if the cards somehow addressed her. She is on record as saying that she sees no connection of the card to her, and also she doesn't really like tacos that much.
- Dr. Spin

Others take the troll skull in a different direction and point to Pavel Altinoy, who is a board member and also one of the producers of the *Troll Hunter* trid show. Pavel was also a bronze medalist in the 2056 Summer Olympics (1500m Steeplechase), so the laurel wreath could conceivably point to him.

Some people like to go straight to the top and connect all of the symbols to Nadja Daviar, though there is so much mythology about her (she has a troll skull on her mantle that was left to her by Dunkelzahn! A tribe of Amazon jungle metavariants bequeathed her the nickname of "The Weeping Angel" for some reason!) that everything and anything can be connected to her in some way. The devil is in the verification.

Note that some people skip all this theorizing and go straight to Rael White-Oak, thanks to the white tree (which is not, of course, definitively an oak) on the wheel.

SEVEN OF BLADES

Interpretations here focus a lot on graffiti. On the steps below the central character, we see the number

"017" and a box with the letters "FCROX" written in a box. On a nearby wall is an oddly sketched figure, perhaps a person in a stocking cap, looking like they are in the act of making graffiti. A few theories have come out connecting these elements, and here are two of the best. The first one reads the initials in columns and comes up with Francis Ronald Xavier, the seventeen-year-old son (or perhaps just "son") of MCT researcher Dr. Penelope Ann Xavier. He is a known graffiti artist whose tag is FRCTL.

- There's no way Francis and Penelope are mother and son, if only because "Penelope" has not lived the sort of life that lends itself to child-rearing (not clear on what I mean? Read her initials). Most people think Francis is one of her peers who happens to be a (surgically disguised) elf, whose has the youthful looks of his kind. If he and his "mother" are messed up in this, it can't be anything good.
- Plan 9

Others read the initials to stand for "Filamena Carraba ROX." Carraba is the lead singer of Kertwang, whose debut album *17* had a twelve-week string at number one on the charts earlier in the year. The biggest hit single from the album is "Graffiti Splash." Now, Kertwang was unknown before this year, so how Carraba would have been involved in the early years of Taco Temple is unknown. It's possible, of course, that she just bought in late.

- Taco Temple is a tour sponsor. Take that for what you will.
- Dr. Spin

KNIGHT OF BLADES

The analysts have had to dig deep on this one, as there are few other signifiers on the card besides the magnificent, motorcycle-riding modern knight. This has caused intense analysis of every little detail of the picture, such as:

- The design-oriented analysts have focused on the various shades of blue in the woman, looking for clues there. This gets incredibly wonky—for example, the primary color of the eye cover has been identified as Tanager Turquoise or Island Paradise, while the blue on the arm seems to have some Scuba Blue and perhaps Blue Curaçao in it. This has led to identification of people named Tanager, people from Tangiers, people who own scarlet tanagers as pets, people who like scuba diving, people who were born in Curaçao, people who vacation in Curaçao, and so on.
- The two visible numbers on the motorcycle's display are 06 and 23, so analysts have looked at notable events or birthdays that occurred on June 23. Two notable things they have discovered is that Curaçao-born Evo executive and fast-food specialist Ariven Herring was born on June 23, and the firebombing of the New Visions church that announced to the world that Alamos 20,000 was a (terrible) thing happened on that date.
- Observers have claimed the two shades of blue feathers on her headdress likely come from a blue-and-gold macaw, which is native to South America. Wilda Wong of Amazonia has one of the most extensive private aviary collections in the world; this fact will become more relevant when connected to the next item.
- This one gets a little gross and morbid, but some analysts have spent a lot of time studying the blood flowing off the knight's katana. While they would really like to have found a complete word, the best they can do is a few letters, which they tend to read as EE, WW, or WVW. This has put a particular spotlight on Wilda Wong from above, as she is quite wealthy and some believe the initials combined with the feathers point right at her.

This may all seem like stretching, but the theorists are working with what they've got.

- Too many of these theories are too direct, looking for the card to basically spell out the name of the owner, rather than point out different circumstances of the person. The WW could stand for a place—as it turns out, Ariven Herring lives in Walla Walla. If you go with the WVW interpretation, there's an exec named Emile Tanager who works for Wilson Viers Woodruff, a powerful law firm in Georgia.
- Mr. Bonds

FIVE OF COINS

In contrast to the Knight of Blades, this card is an embarrassment of riches, creating a sort of paralysis in developing a small pool of identified people because the clues are so numerous. Among the clues that have been identified are:

- The squeezable salads ad that highlights Caesar salads, pointing to someone named Caesar;
- The modified Underground label in the upper right corner of the image suggest the initials "O.C.";
- The tag on the ear of the rat has led to suggestions of many people who have worked in test labs in some capacity;
- The ad for Husky Tom's Discount Cybereyes has led many people to look at trolls named Tom or Thomas, though it should be noted that this is in fact a real London establishment;
- To some, the brawling figures in the background resemble the letters FTKC
- The man waving in the ad near the upper-right portion of the picture is not part of the ad. He

is a Matrix joke called Hi Bob! The joke, insofar as it goes, is to insert him into odd and unlikely places. Having him show up in a public place like this is just the sort of thing pranksters enjoy.

Those are some of the primary clues. Certain forums went into a tizzy, then, when a troll scientist named Otto Thomas Caesar was found to be working at an animal-testing facility of something called the Foreman-Toro-Klein Corporation. The fact that this FTKC is not even an A-rated corporation, and Caesar is a low-level lab technician of zero renown, has not deterred the analysts from finding the fact of Caesar's existence very exciting. Now they just have to figure how Hi Bob! fits into his life.

SIX OF COINS

There are two major points of focus on this card—the white handprints and the briefcase with five stars. Some people connect them to the Poulsen poltergeist of 2025, where there were dozens of photos of mysterious white handprints found in a farmhouse owned by the Poulsen family in Middlesex County, Virginia.

- There was also a teenage girl on the premises and a regular shortage of flour.
- Snopes

This leads people to Ludmilla Poulsen, a vice president with AresSpace. There are few other ways to connect Poulsen to the franchise, but that doesn't keep people from getting excited.

The briefcase is on no fewer than four cards, telling a story of how it moves from hand to hand. Many people want to go with a direct interpretation, pointing their fingers at Estella Kovacs, one of Johnny Spinrad's top designers who uses five stars as her personal logo (though they are in a pentagonal shape, rather than the briefcase's arc). Others have decided that the important element is where the briefcase ends up. Many people think the final card in the briefcase sequence is the Two of Cups, and so they have looked at the couple who have the briefcase in their possession as clues to the identity of the owner. Some feel the male figure points to Lawrence "Coral Snake" Blue, a former urban brawl star who has since moved into an ownership role with the Seattle Screamers.

THE DEEP DARK

You knew this was coming. A franchise grows from two locations to twelve thousand in three years. This is not simply business. This is global conquest. In this theory, Taco Temple is an evil, nefarious force, something that threatens us all unless it is stopped. The nature of the threat is based on repeated imagery in the five cards, namely, the star in the palm, the laurel wreath, the children, and the fact that the five cards invariably depict night-time settings. As I mentioned previously, the star-in-palm and laurel wreath imagery is a combination of strength and victory. That, according to interpreters, is clear indication of Taco Temple's imperialistic—if that's the proper word for corp conquests—bent. They are dedicated to victory through strength. Their first target? Children. The young lady being given a surprise award, the abandoned child being approached by a walking taco, the children receiving clothing, and the street urchins already in thrall of the Temple, passing around Really Big Drinks for sustenance—they are the targets. They are how this power will take hold.

It's a dark power, hence the nighttime imagery. And that's as far as agreement gets. Some say the darkness represents nightmare spirits, who are the true power behind the chain. Others say it represents the Black Lodge. Some say it simply points to dark magic. As far as targeting children goes, one theory says they just stand for the most vulnerable in society, and that the conquest will run from the bottom up, taking the legs of society out from under it so they can watch the top collapse. Others say children will be targeted by whatever the dark force is, because that's when you can get people before they become strong enough to hurt you. Many Awakened individuals can be identified by their auras before they have developed any real talent. Want to prevent them from growing stronger in their magic to the point where they become a threat? Eliminate them while they're young.

Dark stuff. If it's true, every nuyen spent at Taco Temple is supporting something horrible. Eat carefully. And maybe look for ways to root out and nip it in the bud. Assuming, again, that you give this theory any credence.

TACO
MPLE

TACO TEMPLE
REALLY BIG DRINK

CODES AND PUZZLES

CARD AND PUZZLE BACKGROUND

Every card is a puzzle. Every card is a piece of a bigger puzzle. Many cards are pieces of even greater puzzles than those. All cards are pieces of one final puzzle that could change the Sixth World forever. The puzzles are there to give the players a challenge, making them work to assemble clues to solve larger mysteries. And there are plenty of mysteries to uncover—we'll review some of the puzzles in this section, but not all of them. Some of them remain for players and gamemasters to discover.

Finding the clues to the puzzles should be a sort of game within a game for the players, a chance to stretch their abilities and make connections. As such, players should not be able to simply roll the dice to discover the solutions. Tests and dice rolls can provide hints to players or flashes of intuition, but gamemasters should work on balancing the fun players will have searching for information with the ability to keep moving forward on puzzles, rather than stewing in frustration for long periods.

The players may need to study the cards to find a range of clues. Clues may be icons, objects, people, text, or really anything on the cards. Let players read into as much as they want. If they want to see what other players have found, let them poke around a little on the Internet (though finding clues on their own will be more fun than following a full walkthrough online). You can remind the players that our world and the Sixth World share common roots, so they might find useful information seeking out information on symbols, uncommon names, or literary or historical references.

To determine what characters know about the Sixth World Tarot already, gamemasters can make players roll a Knowledge Skill test using Occult Knowledge [Mental] or Fortune Telling. They may default to other Knowledge Skills such as Magic Theory – 2 [Mental], Pop Culture – 2 [Mental], Gadget Knowledge – 2 [Mental], Collectibles – 4 [Mental], Matrix Memes – 4 [Mental], or something similar. They could also do a Matrix Search with a threshold of 6 and an interval of 12 hours. Note, though, that skilled hackers are on the alert for anyone looking for information on the Tarot, so those kinds of searches may draw the type of attention that will keep the players on their toes.

KNOWLEDGE TEST RESULTS

Each level of knowledge gained learns the content listed with the number of hits as well as the content for lower numbers of hits.

0 HITS: NO KNOWLEDGE

This is the first the character has heard of it.

1 HIT: VAGUE KNOWLEDGE

There is a modern take on the classic tarot deck. It's super rare and expensive. Might have seen a pic of a card or two briefly in a passing meme—but not sure.

2 HITS: RUMOR KNOWLEDGE

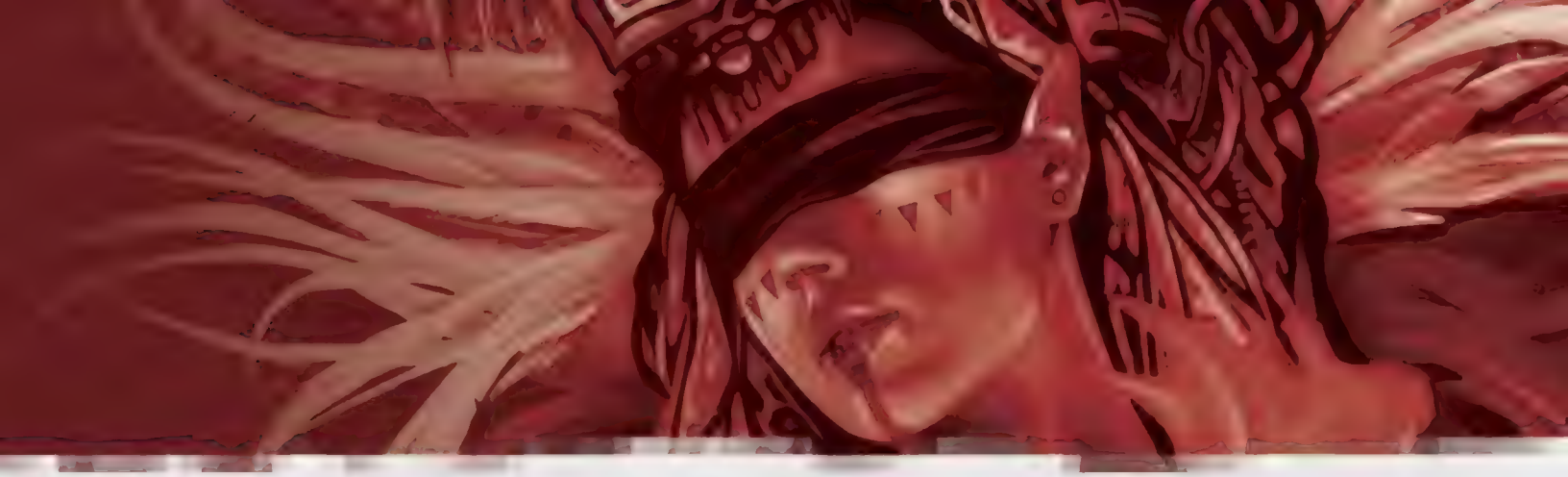
Somebody built some kind of hologram device that only shows one tarot card at a time to go along with the more conventional cards. There are detailed faces on the cards, and a number of people think they recognize themselves in the deck. They're pissed, especially because the cards picture them in some pretty crap situations. Lots of people—corp execs, magic researchers, wealthy people with too much time on their hands, random crackpots—want to get their hands on the cards to figure out their secrets.

3 HITS: PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

The Tarot Deck is either a meme gone out of control or an elaborate prank. Lots of people are looking for images, but few are willing to share what they have. A lot of the ones that find their way to the Matrix get edited somehow. Respect for whomever came up with this.

4 HITS: DETAILED KNOWLEDGE

There are seventy-eight cards in a traditional tarot deck. There is reasonably clear evidence that about half



a deck's worth of cards have been found. The rest are buried deep in private collections or lost somewhere, buried in forgotten parts of the world.

No publisher has taken credit. No artist has stepped forward. No manufacturer code was ever discovered. The projectors are fairly basic tech, but the software inside is in a language no hacker has yet been able to identify. That makes the projectors difficult to hack, as they don't respond to conventional software language.

Tarot decks have a mixed reputation among Sixth World diviners. Many are quick to point out that the vast majority of tarot decks out there have no magical essence, and thus are unlikely to be connected to any common source of divining information. Others, though, insist that the cards do not have to be magic—they are simply a tool to help diviners focus, and the people do the magic work. Regardless of the views of the magocracy, the general public remains fascinated by the idea that they might by able to tap into the magic that flows through the world. The Sixth World Tarot takes this to another level, and the combination of cards that seem to have touches of mana on them and the unusual projectors have caught their imagination.

Then you have incidents like what happened when the image for the Three of Blades appeared online. It showed a man lying dead on a floor inlaid with a Mayan calendar-like pattern on the floor, and three green blades—one lying next to him, one stabbed through a gaping abdominal wound, and the other stabbed through a heart that is lying around (there's lots of debate about whether or not the heart belongs to the man, based on the position of the wound and the like). About two months after the card started making the rounds, a guy was killed in Aztechnology corporate housing in Downtown Seattle in a fashion that looked a lot like the card. One enterprising photographer even took a shot of the crime scene that framed it almost exactly like the card. It was freaky.

Freakier still: New versions of the Three of Blades cards have been reported, with a woman lying dead on Persian tile. The basic knife setup, though, remains the same.

5+ HITS: SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE

HISTORY OF THE SIXTH WORLD TAROT

The origin of the Sixth World Tarot may actually go into pre-Awakening times. The tarot itself, as we know it, dates back to the Renaissance. Even though they were first used for games, the images on the trump suit (the major arcana) were believed to have mysterious origins and exceptional power to scry into the future. These beliefs were only widely explored in the late half of the nineteenth century. In 1910, A.E. Waite (a writer) and Pamela Colman Smith (an artist) produced a tarot deck where every single card for every suit was illustrated with an evocative image for the express purpose of exploring "hidden mysteries," including the future. The deck was published by the Rider Company in 1910 and has since been commonly called the Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot (or RWS for short). While the RWS was neither the only nor the first tarot like it, it was the one that most captured the imagination of the public. The images therein were heavily influenced by previous decks and the works of famous occultists like Eliphas Levi.

How the Sixth World Tarot evolved from that foundation is a mystery (though some say it was there all the time, shaping and influencing the RWS and all other decks). The fact that Dunkelzahn bequeathed an "antique tarot deck" to Dr. Miles Swinburne has raised a few eyebrows, along with speculation about just what kind of deck it was and whether it contained some Sixth World Tarot cards. Dunkelzahn would likely have useful opinions to share on the matter; it's a shame he is not available to share them.

Publishers continue to produce tarot decks for public consumption, and some newer decks have been influenced by the Sixth World Tarot. Some diviner acquaintances say the copies lack the power of the real cards; others say the power of the real cards is mostly in the heads of the users, acting as a kind of placebo.

CARDS AND PROJECTORS

A few years ago, the first **holographic projector** with a tarot card emanating from it was purchased from a used tech shop in Seattle. It was a fluke of discov-

ery. It was not signed or labeled in any way. Nobody understood what it was or why it was even there. It likely would have been left in the drawer of a gadget collector had not another been discovered by a tarot enthusiast in London who found theirs in a waste bin and shared a quick video with friends. That find was followed by dozens of other discoveries of the small projectors—each of a unique card, and each in a different city around the world.

Something was up. No publisher took credit. No artist has stepped forward. No manufacturer code was ever discovered. Images of about thirty of the cards can be found on the Matrix. It's presumed there must be a full deck of seventy-eight cards out there, but some scholars have admitted there is no definitive reason for that to be the case.

It's also not clear why there are both projectors and conventional cards floating around in the world, or what advantage the projectors give. After the image on the Three of Blades changed following the apparent prophetic fulfillment of its image, some thought the projector enabled the change, but then a physical version of the Three of Blades was found with the same altered picture, which, as is common with the Sixth World Tarot, threw everything into question again.

THE AWAKENING AND THE CONSPIRACY

"The cards are real." That's a refrain that keeps coming up in connection with the cards. Somehow they contain images of mysteries and secrets from around the world. While once the tarot were considered allegorical, there is a growing movement of interested parties who believe them to be very literal. They point to inconsistent symbols and odd elements added to cards, seemingly for little reason, as clues to something deeper. Sometimes, clues add up to something very clear; other times they are vague and very open to interpretation. Because of these clues, collectors attempt to modify the images they share with the public, keeping the true clues to themselves. Nothing found on the Matrix is trusted—only the actual cards/projectors can be fully believed.

HOW DIFFERENT POWERS PERCEIVE THE TAROT

DRAGONS

The original assumption was that dragons would not be terribly interested in the Sixth World Tarot, as the prophecies contained in them are probably still narrower than most dragons' long-term plans. That is to say,

dragons will already be anticipating anything the cards predict. A few factors, though, have undermined that assumption. One is the apparent appearance of Lofwyr himself on the Dragon card. While that card does not show any alarming circumstance, combinations of cards have been known to predict unusual events, and Lofwyr has demonstrated interest in what kind of readings are being done with his card and how people are reacting to those predictions.

The Tarot also represents an unknown form and indeterminate amount of power, and those are things that tend to command draconic attention.

SPIRITS

Studies of spirit personality and comprehension are still a developing field, but most Sixth World researchers believe that spirits of man, unless they are great spirits, have a significant portion of their knowledge shaped by the circumstances of their summoning. If a spirit is summoned using one of the actual Tarot devices or cards, then, it might be able to share some information about it. Gamemasters can make a Knowledge test with a threshold of 3, assuming the spirit has a relevant Knowledge skill equal to its Force. Each net hit reveals a single new piece of information about the image on the device/card—and only that image. It will not know or be able to share information about other images (even related ones) unless they were also used in the summoning.

Great spirits of man (and there are very few of them) only involve themselves with the mysteries that affect all metahumanity. Petty profit, mortality, and the fates of individuals do not draw their intervention. The clues in the Tarot are for metahumans to figure out, rather than to be explained to them by beings with a longer lifespan and deeper knowledge. Still, the spirits can't afford to maintain total disinterest in human activities, as some of the puzzles may foretell events that could threaten millions of lives and may even suggest extinction. This will lead them to aid metahumanity, because if metahumanity disappears—so do they.

Astral quests may be undertaken to find individual cards, discover something depicted in the cards, or find a great spirit who may have important knowledge about events and symbols depicted on a card. Such quests are often extremely hazardous but may be attempted with one or more cards or devices present. When designing an astral quest, consider that each Tarot image represents a completely unique side of metahumanity and therefore a unique challenge to overcome. The card and its associated meanings can inspire the nature of the quest, particularly the types of challenges players should overcome on the quest. For example, if players are trying to discover the meaning of some of the elements of the Five of Cups (like the identity of "The Collector," whose title is on a large ARO in the image), the meanings of loss and alliance that are tied to the card could be the basis for a quest centered on the ties between team members and testing those bonds.

MEGACORPS

Assume any executive involved with a megacorp with an interest in the Tarot has at least 5 ranks in a relevant Knowledge skill. This doesn't mean the corporation necessarily has any special knowledge of why the cards show what they do, but it at least means that they have an extra-special desire to learn for themselves. If they get shadowrunners involved on a Tarot image of particular interest to them, they will work carefully to control the information they give to the team.

Each individual and corporation has their own reasons to get involved at different levels of intensity. Ares, Sæder-Krupp, Horizon, Spinrad, NeoNET, Aztechnology, and Renraku appear multiple times throughout the deck. Shiawase and Wuxing are not as well represented. They all, though, should be involved in the Tarot hunt—after all, those without as much representation might be worried about why they're not depicted as much, or they might be trying to gather information on their rivals. That means that in a particular mission, a card may show an Ares logo, but Mr. Johnson might be from Shiawase. The nature of the cards and the fact that images of them circulate around the Matrix mean that there is an ever-present risk of public involvement once observers put enough pieces together. Locations and people depicted on the cards may be on high alert.

The nature of the information will always be valuable, and megacorps will not just send a few uniformed thugs to secure their interests. Only the best of their best will be deployed, especially in cases where the CEO is concerned.

Lone wolves inside the corporate forest won't have those resources—but they will certainly pretend that they do.

PUZZLES

There are a wide range of puzzles hidden within the cards. Because this section explains some of those puzzles and how they can be used in gameplay, it is for **GAMEMASTERS ONLY**. To have their best experience, players should go into the game without inside knowledge of the puzzles, so they can have the fun of unraveling them.

There are several different types of puzzles in the cards, so we'll discuss them by type.

BASIC PUZZLES

The basic puzzles are the ones that are easiest to spot, the elements that are most easily identified as puzzles.

As you'll see, the fact that they are categorized as "basic" does not necessarily mean they are easy to solve.

HIDDEN OBJECT PUZZLES

Every single card contains one or more (usually more) hidden objects that don't appear to go with the rest of the image. Some objects stand out, while others are more integrated into the image and might be mistaken as a standard part of it. Some objects are text, some are symbols, some are animals, and some are abstract. Some texts are in a foreign language or even encrypted; players and gamemasters are encouraged to use the Internet to help them find solutions and translations. The Internet may also be useful in finding interpretations of certain symbols and objects.

No hidden object stands alone. Every single one has a relationship with three or more hidden objects on other cards. Once all the correct cards are brought together, and the hidden objects are found, the solution is possible. Best of all, there is not one single correct answer or interpretation. Every solution selected by the gamemaster is correct. While this book offers some of the more direct solutions, they are not by any means the only solutions possible.

WAVE PUZZLES

The puzzles on the screens of the projector strips at the bottom of the cards include both clues and keys for other clues. Most clues and keys in the wave puzzles can be used to launch runs; some are described in this book, others can be invented by gamemasters.

MONOLITH PUZZLES

The monolith puzzles appear in the lower right corner of every card. And that's all the information you get about them right now. Good luck!

ADVANCED PUZZLES

These puzzles are not as immediately noticeable as the basic puzzles; they may contain elements that look like graffiti or background objects; only careful examination will show that there is information runners can pull out of them.

SCRIPT PUZZLES

Not every text is written in English, and not every language uses the Roman alphabet. Texts in other scripts rarely use strict letter substitutions. If a clue is in a foreign script, expect it to be in a foreign language. This makes some clues very difficult unless one is fluent in those languages. An Internet search for dictionaries and translators will definitely help.

Throughout the cards you can find text written in a language completely unique to the Sixth World Tarot. This language is called the Ancient Script. Players are welcome to decrypt clues as best as they can, but the complete solution for players is not in this book. We want to let the cryptographers among you have some time to figure it out without spoilers!

FLAG PUZZLES

Below every projector is a drop-down metal flag with markings on it. Hidden within the flags are two keys to help unlock the mysteries of other clues. These keys are incredibly important for the advanced campaigns, but not so much for the Operations or one-off jobs.

KEYS

An added level of complexity to the Sixth World Tarot clues is the need for keys. Not every clue is immediately decipherable. Only when a key is found will those clues come to mean anything valuable.

These keys are reusable elements that gamemasters can use for their own campaign ideas. It is very important that players don't cheat and learn about these in advance.

The keys themselves are hidden in puzzle form, and some players might find it entertaining to try to figure them out for themselves. Other players may wish to skip that part or simply have their character roll dice to have their character figure it out for them. In these cases, the only way they can figure it out is to physically possess all of the source material necessary (i.e., actual cards or projectors instead of images downloaded from the Matrix, etc.), and the threshold for such tests should be no lower than 3.

THE GRID MAP

The Grid Map is created by aligning, in the correct order, the flags of most of the minor arcana.

Throughout the deck are coordinates that refer to this grid. Those coordinates are always formatted in curved parentheses as two numbers separated by a comma, such as: (41,37).

Starting with the upper-left-most point, the first number is the longitude (counting horizontally left-to-right) and the second is the latitude (counting vertically top-to-bottom).

Gamemasters can use these coordinates to send runners darting across the globe for key pieces of evidence, working to stop an event prophesied by a card before it happens, or performing other image-related tasks.

THE RADIAL MAP

The Radial Map is created by aligning, in the correct order, the flags of the major arcana, and the face cards and aces of the minor arcana.

Throughout the deck are coordinates that refer to this grid. Those coordinates are always formatted as two numbers separated by a colon, such as: 32:30 on the Knight of Coins.

Starting with the center-most point on the map, count out five circles outward. There, two points are very close to each other, with one just east of the other. Beginning with that eastern point and counting clockwise, the first number is the angle of a line drawn from the center point to your destination. The second number is then the exact number of circles away from the center point on that line. As with the Grid Map, the Radial Map can be used to send runners on globe-trotting missions.

TWO KEYS

There are numerous puzzles built into the wave patterns of the screens on the tarot projection devices. Among them are two simple puzzles any gamemaster can use for their own purposes.

FREQUENCY PUZZLE

The first ten cards of the Blades suit display specific harmonic frequencies. Counting the number of waves on the screen reveals a digit between zero and nine. In certain circumstances, a number may be given with the numbers either in red or featuring the words "convert" or "solve." In those cases, each digit refers to the Blades card wave puzzle. So the number 1 would be converted to the number 6 because the Ace of Blades features six waves. What this means is that the combination of the number value of the card and the number of waves can form the basis of a simple substitution cipher.

SEISMOGRAM PUZZLE

The first ten cards of the Batons suit illustrate a logarithmically increasing wave pattern. In this case, it represents the Richter Scale for measuring shock waves.

Gamemasters can use this to denote the threat of what the players may face. For instance, if the characters have to decide between fleeing a building and disarming a bomb, it might first be nice to know how big the looming explosion is.

In general, gamemasters should not use anything above 5.0 in their games, as larger numbers would incur widespread devastation that can break the game world.

SEISMOGRAM PUZZLE

NUMBER	DAMAGE
0.2	Large grenade
1.5	Construction blast
2.1	Small earthquake
3.0	Truck bomb
4.0	Large air strike bomb
5.0	Moderate earthquake
6.0	Hiroshima bomb
7.0	Devastating earthquake
8.0	Tsar Bomb (50mT)
9.0	Toba super volcano
10.0	10 super volcanoes
13.0	Chicxulub comet

USING CARDS AS ADVENTURE HOOKS

Each card in the Sixth World Tarot has the potential of launching players on a mission. Whether it is to solve puzzles buried in the card, stop events foretold by the card, pursue objects shown on the card, or other work, there are several ways to use a single card to launch the players on a new job. Throughout this book, ways of using individual cards as adventure hooks have been provided.

These jobs become more complex when more than one card is involved, and runners need to build connections between them and figure out what each one has to do with the others. These sorts of connections can build excitement with the players as they gain first one card, then another, then figure out the information the cards are communicating. The number of plots that can be developed in this way is limited only by gamemasters' imagination. To get that process started, this book has several multi-card runs called **Operations**.

Every gamemaster is encouraged to wade through the deck themselves to find inspiration for their own campaigns. Maybe there is a card that already fits into their campaign, or maybe a card could create a whole new dynamic to a plotline the characters thought they understood. Look at multiple cards. Maybe the same character appears more than once. There is a large amount of detail to draw from—feel free to ignore or reuse any of the clues you find to create something completely original.

OPERATIONS

There are countless hidden clues built into the cards that relate to hidden mysteries within the *Shadowrun* universe. There are mysteries that some people don't want anyone to know, and some mysteries that everyone *should* know. The gamemaster may either feed the story to the players as a solution another character provides, or they can give cards to the players and let them hang themselves with their own speculation. Some Operations involve hidden clues that can connect multiple cards. These Operations would include work to obtain

the right cards, examine the clues, and figure out what they mean. Some Operations involve cards that feature the same or related images. This guide explains how the clues are designed to work together—but it doesn't mean that those are the only ways they could work. Gamemasters are free to develop their own connections and storylines as they see fit.

Operations are categorized by the collection of cards used to make them. Vertical Operations use all the Minor Arcana of the same numeral (all the Aces, all the Twos, all the Knights, etc.). Horizontal Operations, which are not included in this book, use all the cards of the same suit (all the Batons, all the Blades, etc.). Story Operations involve cards that share images across them. For instance, the Two of Blades, the Ten of Batons, and the Five of Coins all feature the same woman, making her story an adventure all by itself. Arching Operations involve hidden clues across many cards.

EXAMPLE

The Nine of Coins features an exotic woman with a consort. Behind them, another couple watches them quietly. The Queen of Coins features this same exotic woman, bored on her luxurious yacht surrounded by many excesses. The Two of Coins features the same couple toasting each other. In the background, the same consort from the Nine of Coins attempts to flee while bound tightly in rope.

An operation involving these cards could start with the team getting a call from Mr. Johnson: "I'm a little concerned about some images on the Matrix. It looks like my wife is traveling with some fool who ends up getting himself kidnapped. I'm not sure what to think about any of it. We have children, and she's not prone to wander. I need someone to find out who the fool is and if anything that happens to him is a threat to my family. Oh, and if you need to geek him or the kidnappers, there could be a bonus in it for you."

CAMPAIGNS

There are some groups of images and clues that are far more complex than a team can solve in a single night or even a few Assignments (see, for example, the *Taco Temple* chapter, p. 66). This chapter contains notes on some cards that can be linked, along with clues and suggestions on how to turn them into a campaign. Campaign details include the title, the objective, valuable NPCs (and villains), plot points, obstacles (including villains), and victory conditions that the gamemaster can use as the foundation for incorporating the Sixth World Tarot into events that will affect the *Shadowrun* universe.

SAMPLE OPERATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

Below are some ideas for Operations and Campaigns featuring ways to use combinations of cards to develop stories and missions for runners. This is not an exhaustive list of possible storylines by any means, or the only possible interpretations of what is happening in the cards.

ONE AT A TIME

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: EASY

CLUES

- Ace of Batons: Text "Paganini," BONUS: "XL" (40)
- Ace of Blades: Glyphs "FAUST" (in starry runes)
- Ace of Coins: Text "Next" (beside portal in painting)
- Ace of Cups: Text "Alone Poe" (rock)

SOLUTIONS

Faust and Paganini are both famous for having made pacts with the Devil. Edgar Allen Poe wrote a brief poem posthumously titled "Alone" that reads (in part):

> *Then*—in my childhood—in the dawn
> Of a most stormy life—was drawn ...
> From the thunder, and the storm—
> And the cloud that took the form
> (When the rest of Heaven was blue)
> Of a demon in my view—

In the Ace of Coins, there is a portal to an unknown place with the word "NEXT" beside it.

The bonus clue of "XL" is the Roman numeral for forty, which is an important number in the Bible (representing, for example, the 40 days and nights Jesus fasted before being tempted by the Devil [Matthew 4:1-11]).

Combining all these clues has led some to believe that if they find and enter a particular astral rift, they may meet the Devil himself (or maybe just a great spirit) who will grant them extraordinary power.

CAMPAIGN

Mr. Johnson imagines the power promised in the cards will be gained by crossing the threshold of an astral rift to meet some great spirit, but he is not about to make a fool out of himself if the portal doesn't actually exist. He provides the runners with the Ace of Coins and the instructions to find/prove the portal is real, but the runners need to find the rest of the cards if they want to know what's going on. If they just go in blindly, they could anger the great spirit, destroy the portal, or bring about some other negative result. Alternatively, any character may be able to figure the signs out for themselves and decide to take a risk and look for the portal on their own. Anyone who enters will vanish for forty days and not remember a thing. They will improve any one attribute by 1 (yes, including Magic or Resonance from 0, though normal restrictions tied to Essence and not having both Magic and Resonance still apply) and any one skill by two. They will also gain the quality Borrowed Time, and in this instance it cannot be bought off with Edge. No more than one PC may enter the portal. Once it is used, it vanishes.

SETUP

MR. JOHNSON

Mr. Johnson is a retired executive from Ares named Carmine Rosa. During the last fifteen years of his career, he oversaw Ares "Special Arms" division attempting to integrate magic with modern weapon technology. His department's failures were consistent. Many externally (and some internally) even accused him of employing accounting tricks to help the corp hide funds from investors and clients. At one time, he was a hermetic magician—but his magic was so weak that one freak LAV crash during a 2072 trade show demonstration erased it in a ball of fire. After three weeks of recovery (aided by extensive magical healing), he found that he was magically barren. He kept his job for three more years and then retired with full benefits. His enemies still think he helped Damian Knight embezzle hundreds of millions. Carmine had spent his retirement pining for what was or what could have been. Then the Tarot came into his life, and he believes the Aces offer an opportunity to regain what he lost—and maybe much more.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Johnson's initial job pitch seems simple enough. He says he already has the Ace of Coins, and he will pay 25,000 nuyen for each other ace the runners can deliver. He provides the following information:

The Ace of Blades is owned by a professional hockey player for Vancouver named Donna LeSabre. She is an ork and bought it sight-unseen from a grey-market auction and might have buyer's remorse. She collects swords, and the card doesn't feature a sword at all. She might be willing to sell at a reasonable price.

The Ace of Batons is owned by a former decker in Seattle named Phish. He currently owns a popular cyberbar in the Matrix named The White Water Café. He's a decker and might be willing to make a trade for the card, especially if he gets some valuable paydata.

The Ace of Cups is owned by a freak of a shaman named Shrike in Miami. The card features a bird called a shrike on it, so it's probably in his lodge, but it's doubtful he'll sell. He's

seems to be mostly off the grid, and he keeps his lodge very well hidden. The local security forces there all have "Watch" signals on his PAN, as he has been in the vicinity of near random disappearances from around the city. The runners might be able to find some local help looking for Shrike, but they should be careful about not to let any leaks about what they are up to make their way to Shrike's ears.

BLADES RUN

- Donna LaSabre is heavily cybered and a star athlete. Injuring her will bring the entire establishment—security, the Vancouver Public, anyone invested in tourism—down on the runners' heads.
- Donna spent 10,950 nuyen on the card, and she hates it. She wants 15,000 nuyen for the card, but skilled negotiators might be able to get her as low as 10,000.
- She lives in a secure apartment building, but she keeps the card in a candy dish by her bed.
- Media rumors say she's dating a Seattle-area shadowrunner.

BATONS RUN

- Phish is a free-love, free-information, free sim-drinks-for-everyone hippie.
- The White Water is a cybercafé themed like a Pacific Northwest river. Phish's icon is a tree (a conifer-deciduous mix actually) that sways to the rhythm of the cafe's music. Other patrons draw virtualcohol from taps on her trunk with no charge, though she chats them up relentlessly when they are drunk, hoping they'll let slip bits of useful information
- In Meat-Mode, Phish is a fifty-seven-year-old woman living in a nice downtown Seattle apartment. She looks like somebody's grandmother—complete with ugly sweaters. Her sweaters, however, are usually brown with what appear to be leaves and twigs stuck to them.
- Phish wants information on the Tarot Cards more than anything. She's convinced the cards are a decker's practical joke—and she wants to know who that genius is. She didn't pay for the card she has and has no real attachment to it ... oddly, that doesn't mean it will be free. She might loan or "sell" hers if the team can convince her that they'll share everything they learn.

CUPS RUN

- Shrike is a small, frustrated, and aggressive human male. He wears clean and attractive clothes and frequents the South Beach club scene.
- Shrike is sociopathic and powerful, and he hates visitors.
- He is romantically frustrated, and the gamemaster can decide how much that frustration has bubbled over into violence. His namesake bird is notably violent, impaling its victims so it can tear them apart while devouring them. The gamemaster can take this into very dark, violent territory, but they should be careful to work within their group's comfort zone.

AFTERMATH

- At some point, the players should learn that both Donna LeSabre and Phish have died, and their homes were burned.
- Mr. Johnson has hired another runner team to clean up after the players, eliminating everyone who has any information about the Aces.
- Once the team turns the card over to Mr. Johnson, that runner team will be charged with killing the player characters along with anyone else who knew about the job, like a fixer. That pursuit team should present a difficult challenge to the players.

POSSIBLE ENDINGS

- The players turn the cards over to Mr. Johnson without argument and engage the clean-up runner team, hopefully surviving the fight.
- The players keep the cards for themselves and enter the astral rift, discovering whatever waits on the other side.
- The players are ambushed by Mr. Johnson, who takes the cards and captures them to use as test-subjects, bait, or even sacrifices for the great spirit he believes is through the astral rift. The players either need to get free or hope they can somehow talk the spirit into a better outcome than whatever Mr. Johnson has in mind.
- The players turn the cards over but attempt to destroy the astral rift before Mr. Johnson can use it.
- The players try to sell the cards to the highest bidder, and they bring down the attention of the type of people willing and able to pay six figures for a set of cards. Their next job will be to complete the transaction while getting clear of any rich people they might have angered.

THE GATES OF WAR

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: EASY

CLUES

- Two of Batons: Text "mars quaerit belli portas"
- Two of Blades: Janus on wall
- Two of Coins: Pendant depicting the Gates of Janus
- Two of Cups: Glyphs "Aedis Jani," garland over exit, portrait of Rubens

SETUP

In almost any large sprawl in the Sixth World, there are spots where various organized crime units are clashing, battling for territory and looking to gain an upper hand in terms of customers and revenue flow. The biggest criminal organizations in the world—namely, the Yakuza, the Triad, and the Mafia—have people in the highest reaches of power, sitting in corporate boardrooms and c-suites. Low-level mob wars can quickly fill up the morgues in any given sprawl; a full-on war between these powers could shake the world.

A war is what might break out, though, if the cards fall wrong. The runners can play a role in keeping this from happening—or fanning the flames so they can watch the mob world burn.

INTRODUCTION

The Triads are the least centrally organized of the three largest crime syndicates in the Sixth World. It's tough to cut off the head of a snake when there isn't a single head, but someone sure looks like they are putting in the effort. The heads of New York's Large Circle League, Hong Kong's Red Dragon Triad, L.A.'s Sapphire Crane Society, and more have been targeted by assassins. Wing, the Shan Chu of the Sapphire Crane Society, is dead, and Soon Shan of the Large Circle is in critical condition. At each assassination, the symbol of Janus, the two-headed god of Roman mythology, was left on the scene. References to Janus appear repeatedly in the Tarot deck, and the Triads are desperately trying to figure out what the connection is. They naturally assume that their most significant rivals, the Mafia and Yakuza, are behind the killings, but they need more info in order to find out what's going on—and to stop the bleeding.

This job should be chaotic for the runners. The pace of the ongoing assassinations means that people connected to the job keeo getting hit, including whoever hires them. The Triads, naturally, don't take this lying down, and soon cities across the globe are teetering on the edge of mob warfare—which very well might be the point (the Latin phrase on the Two of Batons translates to "Mars seeks gates of war").

THE RUN

This whole Operation should take place in an atmosphere of elevated paranoia, as Triad officers search the cards for signs of who is behind the killings and who the next victims might be. The Two of Blades, featuring an armed woman with slashed eyes, can be an ominous image, possibly suggesting the fate of an important Triad officer, or showing the form of an assassin who will soon come calling.

The runners can be made to search cards for the Janus symbol—note that it is small on the Two of Coins, so it will not easily be spotted. Once the symbol is found,

interpretations of information on the cards can be wide-ranging, but the runners should often encounter depicted individuals, either as potential victims trying to avoid their fate or killers who are doing the work of Janus to bring endings and new beginnings to the world of organized crime.

POSSIBLE ENDINGS

The real key in this Operation is the identity of Janus, who is behind the killings. This should be an organization rather than an individual, as their activities happen rapidly in spots across the globe. Possible alternatives for the real identity of this organization include:

- Any rival criminal organization
- Rogue law-enforcement officers from Lone Star or Knight Errant who are taking actions out of frustration for crimes they were unable to prosecute
- Extremist neo-anarchists hoping to use the violent tendencies of organized criminals to spark enough violence to destabilize cities
- Occultists who believe the gates of Janus and gates of Mars are actual, mystical things, and their violence might help open them, bringing access to heretofore undiscovered metaplanes

OPERATION VERUM VIRIDI

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: EASY

CLUES

- Four of Batons: Heart, Green Heart
- Four of Blades: Heart, Green Heart
- Four of Coins: Heart, Green Heart, "Make your own luck"
- Four of Cups: 4 hearts, Green Heart

SOLUTION

These cards give a bonus to anyone who, unprompted, makes a four-leaf clover design by placing the corners of the cards together where there are faint green shapes. The character who does this when the characters have all four cards in their possession receives the Lucky Positive Quality and up to 3 points of Edge refreshed immediately and for free (cannot exceed character's maximum). In game, the green shadows that form the clover vanish from the original images immediately. This may never be used more than once.

CAMPAIGN

Mr. Johnson hires the team to acquire the Four of Batons, the Four of Cups, the Four of Blades, and the Four of Coins. Mr. Johnson will not explain why and will expect that the runners won't figure out the clues.

If they figure out the clues and someone uses the cards—even accidentally—Mr. Johnson will be furious and put a hit out on the team for taking the reward he wanted for himself.

The cards can be recovered from people with varying knowledge (including possibly no knowledge at all) about what the four cards might do together.

NOT THAT PENTAGON

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: EASY

CLUES

- Five of Batons: "Pentagon," diamond, 66'6"S
- Five of Blades: "Steal Home," "Pentagon," "1060 W. Addison," sign showing a dipper with a circle and slash on it
- Five of Coins: A famous baseball team logo
- Five of Cups: "Will buy home for 55,555¥. "The Collector," Diamond, Ursa Minor (Little Bear), "Shikakwa Waves" and wave puzzle

SOLUTION

These cards hold a baseball themed set of clues. Someone named "The Collector" is willing to pay 55,555 nuyen for the home plate from Wrigley Field, former home of the Chicago Cubs before the Containment Zone went up. "Cubs," of course, are little bears—which is another name for the constellation Ursa Minor, or the Little Dipper. Ursa Minor could be called by its alternate name "Little Dipper," but the sign indicating there should be no dippers on the Five of Blades should pitch people from this interpretation. Other clues referring to home plate include the reference to 66 feet and 6 inches (the distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate), the pentagon reference (the plate is shaped like a diamond). Wrigley Field's address is 1060 W. Addison Street, which is referenced on the Five of Blades. Chicago was named after the Native American word "Shikakwa" and the wave puzzle on the Five of Cups is the skyline of Chicago in the Sixth World. Additionally, if you were to zoom in on that skyline, you would find images of many hands from the lost souls of Chicago.

CAMPAIGN

Mr. Johnson is a fixer who thinks he knows who "The Collector" is. The fixer only figured out some clues from three of the cards. He knows it is about baseball from "Steal Home," "Diamond," "The Collector," and "Pentagon" references, but the others are lost on him. He is not

a baseball fan himself—he's a puzzle aficionado. He does not recognize any of the city or team clues. He thinks it might be in the Bronx, because that's where the Yankees are, and the Yankees are often the only team non-fans know. If the team can figure out which home plate should be targeted, they can score big. It won't be easy—old Wrigley Field is now the Wrigley Dome, and it has fallen into disrepair and ruin. Odds are, home plate is not there anymore. Fortunately, the most important home plate is not just any base, but the one that was used in the 2016 World Series, when the team won the championship and broke a 108-year-old title drought. That plate has been peacefully enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Because of the millions of fans and the outpouring of adoration for the Cubs' championship, the item has gathered some mana. In the possession of someone who knows how to use it (such as the mysterious "Collector"), it can be incredibly powerful. "The Collector" is actually a dragon who specializes in hoarding sports memorabilia precisely looking for these kinds of artifacts. Gamemasters can choose an existing dragon to assume the identity of The Collector, or introduce a new one to the world. Or they can keep the plate for themselves, and make some truly unique magical foci.

EXES AND HEXES

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: HARD

CLUES

- Six of Batons: "Treasure in the Trunk," B logo
- Six of Blades: "BEN EDWARDS LEFT TREASURE BEHIND," jar of honey, bee
- Six of Coins: "CONVERT IMPOUND #76389," bee
- Six of Cups: "HIS WIFE'S GOLD," bee

SOLUTION

These cards form a treasure hunt. A man named Ben Edwards left his wife's "gold" in the trunk of a car that is now impounded. Whoever can find the gold receives a neglected fortune.

CAMPAIGN

Mr. Johnson knows about this fortune because he actually is Ben Edwards himself (his stats are in the *Character Trove*, p. 123). Unfortunately, he does not have the resources to go after the car himself, and he doesn't think it's a safe place for him to be. That will make funding the run difficult, but the fortune is lucrative enough that he is willing to take on the challenge.

The car does not belong to Ben—that's only one part of the complications of this job.

The first step in the journey is finding the car in an impound lot. The number used to find the car is encoded in the card. Runners must decode the Wave puzzles on the Blades suit to find the correct vehicle.

Breaking into the vehicle to get the treasure may be simpler than finding the cards and decoding the impound number. The real problem is making use of the treasure, because it's not actual gold or cash of any kind. The trunk of the car holds a large jar of Awakened Royal Jelly that Ben needs to complete the transformation of his wife—and current hostage—into a Queen Bee spirit. Ben is a Bee shaman, and he is more than a little upset that he lost the substance he needs

An insect shaman isn't someone you want to anger. What he lacks in funds, he more than makes up for in power, bee spirits, and crazy. The Royal Jelly is valuable—Ares would pay 50,000 nuyen to destroy it, for example—while Ben will make a number of extravagant promises that he can't fulfill yet, but promises he will soon. The runners will have to decide what rewards they want, and what risks they are willing to take on.

SEVEN ATE NINE

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

CLUES

- Seven of Batons: Arachnodrone
- Seven of Blades: "7C (gold) = 10D (blue)"
- Seven of Coins: "#83144291 Unclaimed"
- Seven of Cups: "LOST: EXPERIMENTAL D ..."

SOLUTION

Somehow an experimental arachnodrone was lost in a piece of luggage at Sea-Tac Airport. The code 7C=10D refers to the Wave puzzle. The Seven of Coins has a gold puzzle that reads "SEA" in Morse code. The "Unclaimed" number refers to the baggage ID. It will eventually go up for auction if it remains unclaimed.

The Blades Wave key can be used to convert the number #83144291 to #33174241, which is the correct baggage number.

CAMPAIGN

The runners could acquire the Seven of Coins themselves and figure out enough to start chasing the unclaimed piece of luggage, or they could overhear conversation that starts them on the trail.

The runners are not going to be the only people seeking the prototype drone. The original designer of the drone, an engineer for Renraku, wants the drone back so she can make sure her designs are not stolen. A secretive government agent, who works for one of the black-ops areas of government, wants the drone because he paid good money for it up front, and he wants to reap its benefits, while other assassins would like to use the drone

for their own ends. There's one more piece of competition: the drone itself. It is programmed to defend itself, and its programming has pushed it to outright paranoia; it sees almost anyone who would try to use it as a potential threat. It will defend itself with extreme prejudice.

The gamemaster can decide just how scary this drone should be. Is it a microdrone that can inject poison? Is it a collapsible drone that packs in two swords for limbs and a tool laser for good measure? Does it actively block WiFi signals, causing havoc for riggers and deckers? There are plenty of options.

CLOUD NINE

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

CLUES

- Nine of Batons: Stars, "PUKAPUKA"
- Nine of Blades: "BRING HER HOME"
- Nine of Coins: "The First 99"
- Nine of Cups: "1MREWARD"

SOLUTION

Amelia Earhart founded an organization called the Ninety-Nines for women pilots that is still going strong today. The only known piece of her aircraft was discovered on the island of Nikumaroro, but neither her nor the rest of her aircraft were found. The background of this story is that Earhart somehow turned her fuselage into a makeshift boat and made it all the way to the Cook Islands before it sank. Her remains lie on the island of Pukapuka.

CAMPAIGN

Runners might be able to figure out some of the clues themselves (basic information about the Ninety-Nines can easily be found online), but the truly lucrative part of the offer will come from the Sixth World incarnation of the group, which offers a one million nuyen reward for the return of Earhart's remains. They honestly don't expect to ever pay out—it seems unlikely that any remains exist anymore, let alone sitting in a place where they may be found—but she is their founder and inspiration, so they will pay out if they have to. But they won't trust treasure hunters at all, and the verification process could take months, even years. If the runners can explain how her remains got there, it would be easier.

The Cook Islands haven't been searched for her since the Awakening, and magic and spirits would be a great asset in the search. Her remains are a modern artifact—a relic actually—but a cursed one. Finding her remains might be easy, but attempts to navigate on the journey home result in countless errors. Treat every Navigation or Piloting check by any pilot or program of any vessel carrying her remains as having their threshold increased by 4 to 6.

Multiple tests should be required, as the transportation will happen in multiple stages. Getting to the airport, finding the airplane, flying the plane, finding ground transport, using ground transport—those are all events that may require tests.

AMERICA'S TOP TEN

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: EASY

CLUES

- Ten of Batons: Stars, "World Record Holder"
- Ten of Blades: "10¢ Store"
- Ten of Coins: "Numismatic Museum of Seattle" logo
- Ten of Cups: "Near 1859 S Liberty"

SOLUTION

At the Numismatics Museum of Seattle, there is a world-record collection of dimes in an old glass bottle beside a rare and valuable "1859 S Liberty Seated" dime (itself worth 27,500 nuyen). The rare dime is heavily secured, while the old glass bottle is not (it weighs 750 pounds, so it's kind of its own security system). In the antique bottle is around 15,000 nuyen worth of dimes, but the bottle itself is worth 300,000 nuyen to the right collector. Its glass also contains trace elements of orichalcum. The cards point them to these items of worth without offering solutions on how to acquire them.

CAMPAIGN

Mr. Johnson thinks he has solved this puzzle and hires the team to score the rare dime. He explains the first four clues to them—incorrectly. He thinks it all points to the dime; the bottle doesn't show up on his radar. If the runners leave the bottle, another team will steal it a few hours later, or someone will break it and then the news will announce the bottle's value.

The museum has two floors. The lower level is for banquets and meetings, while the collection—which means the valuable stuff—is on the second. An off-duty Lone Star mage is moonlighting as security at night, stationed on the first floor. He's ready to summon spirit support as needed. He's also a member of the museum and an avid coin collector, so he's very dedicated to the museum and will not bribe easy.

There are two stairways up to the second floor, both interior. There are exterior windows to the second floor, but they are an inch thick, and none of them look into the galleries. They are also wired to set off alarms if they are subjected to too much vibration.

HELLO, NURSE!

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: HARD

CLUES

- Page of Batons: Stars, "*Dr. Genesis 1:28"
- Page of Blades: Medical ship bearing "CAS" logos running into a set of keys; Kanji for Humanity with a hole in it
- Page of Coins: Asklepios coin, ancient text translates to "Fear the Doctor"
- Page of Cups: "Salvage CAS Asklepios"

SOLUTION

Genesis 1:28 reads as follows: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

The CAS medical ship *Asklepios* has gone missing. The CAS lost contact with it weeks ago. It ran aground in the Florida Keys. Aboard the ship, a medical program became self-aware and decided something was wrong with the crew and its military patients. It went about slaving all the drones, the equipment, and even the ship to itself, and then it started a "healing process." As part of this process, it decided that all cyber-technology is foreign to a metahuman body, and it removed everything from everyone. It kept everyone stabilized, but it didn't have the supplies to rebuild or replace what it removed. The entire ship is filled with partially complete surgeries and rooms of discarded cyberware. Those who have survived the nightmare are either completely sedated or losing their minds. People are missing limbs, eyes, organs, even parts of their brains.

Worse yet, a small anthrodrone is walking around the ship with an innocent looking box of "medical waste." It doesn't know what to do with the box. Anytime a person comes near it, it will warn "Please keep a one-hundred-meter distance for your safety" and back away. One problem is that the ship is only eighty meters long. The other problem is that the box is filled with military grade cortex bombs. Runners must proceed with caution.

The first question is, why should the runners proceed at all? First is that the AI has value—evolving artificial intelligences are still not well understood, and the fact that this one evolved means it is worth studying. If the runners can contain it and bring it off the boat, they will find willing buyers.

Second, much of the cyberware harvested by the AI is functional, meaning it's worth money. And there was a fair amount of functional medical equipment on board to begin with, so the salvage value of the ship might add up to hundreds of thousands of nuyen.

CAMPAIGN

The CAS Military knows what's happened on the ship, and they also are well aware of the hazards posed by overly powerful, out-of-control AIs. They are not inclined to risk their own people to salvage the ship. Mr. Johnson's real identity is General Amos Albright; he hires the runners to salvage the ship, but he doesn't mention the AI or the crew. He is very interested in the "deniable" part of "deniable assets"—if anything goes disastrously wrong, he'll set new land-speed records in terms of disavowing shadowrunners. Albright knows how dangerous the AI could be, but he also knows it has considerable value, and he'd love to be able to sell it to the highest bidder. If he gets signs that the runners have the situation under control, he is not above sending in some marines to clean things up and make sure he gets possession of the AI. Players would be well advised to play their cards close to the vest,

The CAS is not the only party interested in the boat. Pirates of the Caribbean live for the chance to pull valuable salvage out of a disabled ship, and gamemasters can feel free to throw some on the scene at a time that would make players' jobs all the more difficult.

THE LAND OF PLENTY

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: ROTFL

CLUES

- Knight of Batons: Stars, Perseus, 1 white star, 5 black stars
- Knight of Blades: Andromeda Slaying Cetus before the Taco Temple, Sun and Moon
- Knight of Coins: Cepheus, destruction beside the Taco Temple
- Knight of Cups: Cassiopeia, Horizon, 5 hooded men

SOLUTION

Time for the mythology experts of the Sixth World to shine! The four cards stand for each of four constellations tied to the story of Andromeda and Perseus—but with a twist. Here are the basics of the myth: King Cepheus and his wife Cassiopeia have a daughter named Andromeda. The queen brags that her daughter is more beautiful than Poseidon's daughters, and they are all punished for it, because that's exactly how Greek gods roll. Cepheus and Cassiopeia are cursed into the stars. Andromeda is supposed to be fed to the great monster Cetus, but Perseus shows what a big stinkin' hero he is by rescuing her.

The Sixth World version of the story runs a little differently. In the Tarot, Andromeda looks to be quite able to protect herself and lay out any opposition. There are clues, though, that point to a hidden story. The north star, the sun and moon, and even the "Horizon" logo all point to the clues being celestial instead of mythological. The real story is this: Five huge meteors are on a collision course with the Earth. One is headed for Tenochtitlan, which will be miraculously resolved by the magic of Ixchel (as seen on card 002. The Shaman). Three more will strike the oceans, but the last and largest will strike West Africa fiercely, causing catastrophic dust clouds, ruining air quality for millions, and killing crops and herds. It will also begin a mild ice-age. It's the kind of thing many people, especially those living in West Africa, would want to stop.

CAMPAIGN

Ivan Orloff is a paranoid crackpot genius who has stared into Matrix-released Tarot images so intensely that he is on the verge of madness. The characters appearing in the knight cards are well known to him, as is the story of Andromeda and Perseus. He could go on about the story and the terrible movies it inspired for hours. He has become very interested in these cards, and he believes he needs to see the originals to see if the theories he has developed bear up under the full details the cards can provide. With a bankroll built up from his days as a trends analyst with Horizon (he was forcibly retired a few years ago when his analysis started to show signs of mental fraying), he hires runners to find the cards for him.

If they succeed in getting all four cards to him, he starts his detailed analysis—and quickly panics. What he thought was a story about hubris and romance turns to absolute horror. He mumbles something prophetic: "All stories begin and end in the stars. And from them." Then he starts up his favorite song on his sound system, pours himself a glass of fine whiskey, and swallows a cyanide pill with a whiskey chaser.

In Orloff's commlink, the runners can find the number of an astronomer named Trill Armstrong. She won't care much about what they have to tell her until she sees the five stars and the five hoods on the originals. Then she will share that she is following her recent discovery of five meteors passing through the solar system. When she checks again, she will discover the iron content of the meteors allowed Jupiter's magnetosphere to alter their path and send them straight toward Earth.

She will name them after the runners, and they will become briefly famous. The world has approximately two years to prepare.

RED HOURGLASS

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: HARD

CLUES

- Queen of Batons: Earth, Plants
- Queen of Blades: Fire, Man (metahumanity)
- Queen of Coins: Water, Beasts
- Queen of Cups: Air, Myths

SOLUTION

These four cards include representations of all eight of the primary realms of magic: Earth, Air, Fire, Water, Plants, Beast, Man (Metahumanity), and Myths. Those clues imply that joining the cards together will bring about a magical effect.

CAMPAIGN

These cards aid in summoning spirits; the more of them you have, the greater the effect. With one card in your possession, you receive an automatic hit on a Drain test to summon a spirit, in addition to whatever hits you roll. With two cards in your possession, you receive two additional services from the summoned spirit, along with the additional hit on a Drain test. With three cards, the possessor receives two automatic hits on a Summoning test and two on the Drain test, in addition to any hits rolled. And with all four cards, any spirits summoned are automatically upgraded to great spirits with no cost to the summoner (the automatic hits on the Summoning and Drain tests do not carry over).

Needless to say, as word gets out about the powers of these cards, the eagerness to possess them increases. Ms. Johnson—whose true identity is Anne Lynne, deputy director of metaplanar assets at the Draco Foundation (her stats are in the *Character Trove*, p. 120)—doesn't just want one of them. She is anxious to have all four. Her ambitions are not modest, as she wants to summon a fine group of great spirits to help her depose Nadja Daviar as head of the Foundation. It's a rather desperate attempt, but if she's going to go down, she'll go down big.

The runners have a chance to make a powerful enemy if they help Lynne attack Daviar—or earn some points with Daviar if they expose Lynne's plans.

ROYAL PAIN

PUZZLE DIFFICULTY: ROTFL

CLUES

- King of Batons: Ancient text, "ED"
- King of Blades: Dog star, "EI"
- King of Coins: "PAHANA WALKS," "SO ALL FOUR ARE TRUE," "PN"
- King of Cups: Ladder in glass, "DO"
- The Matrix (Major Arcana card): Hop Blue Kachina (Blue Star) symbol, twin helpers, symbolized by sun wheel and moon wheel, "GO WEST YOUNG MAN," "THE DEEP," "KKKK"

SOLUTION

Deep (as shown on the Matrix card) is the one True White Brother whose arrival is prophesied by Hopi lore. He is Pahana, "the Man from the East," who will lead them into the Fifth Age of Peace and aid them to survive the ending of this world by fire and ash. Actually, this man is the Deep. The pairs of letters on the four King cards can be re-arranged to spell "Odin" and "Deep" if you use the first letter of each pair for one word and the second letter of each pair for the other. Odin is a one-eyed god—the fact that the King of Cups and the Matrix figure only have one eye are references to that. Additionally, the eels on the Matrix card only show one right and one left eye apiece. In each of those eyes are the two symbols of Hopi Prophecy, the Sun Wheel and the Moon Wheel.

CAMPAIGN

Once people decode all the references on the cards, the job will be clear: Find Deep. The reasons people want to find him, of course, are quite different. With Hopi making up a large portion of the Pueblo Corporate Council, the PCC is very interested in tracking down rumors about Deep—and learning about why there is a connection to Odin. They would very much like to use Deep as an ally, even a leader to push them to greater power.

If the PCC would like to use Deep, then Ghostwalker would very much like him never to emerge. The White Wyrm is dealing with enough headaches in Denver; he does not need a newly resurgent PCC to add to them. Should he hear any hint of one of these five cards coming in or near Denver, he will do what he can to acquire the cards—either to destroy them, or to follow the trail to Deep and destroy him.

The hard-headed leaders of the UCAS also have a reflexive fear of powerful Native American leaders, and they would also prefer he not emerge. They prefer a disinformation campaign, believing that figureheads like Deep gain a large portion of their power from the faith of their followers. Rather than attack Deep, they want to assault that faith. Their intelligence agencies are running a misinformation campaign, aimed at de-emphasizing the possible strength of Pahana and keeping people from putting too much hope in what his emergence may bring.

All of these angles, combined with the usual suspects like the Draco Foundation and Atlantean Foundation attempting to gain knowledge of magical phenomenon, should fuel a variety of runs to keep runners hopping, and hopefully fed.

PENTAG

CARDS AS AUGURY

POSTED BY: JIMMY NO

Here are some facts that will help us on this discussion. On December 5 of last year, Elmer Merritsen was found dead in an alley, ten knives in his back. He was a mid-level executive with Ares subsidiary Quick Trigger Systems, in accounts payable. There was nothing remotely illegal or sexy about his job. He was wearing a white shirt and black pants when he died. He was found in an alley, near a security gate with a red neo-anarchist symbol graffitied on it.

On December 12, Xi Wen was killed in Shanghai. Like Merritsen, she was found in an alley with ten knives in her back, by a security gate with a red neo-a symbol on it. She was on maternity leave with a Wuxing subsidiary for a child she had delivered a month earlier (meaning she only had to work thirty hours a week). She was a clerk, generally processing spreadsheets and databases full of codes she didn't understand. She was wearing a grey pin-striped suit when she died.

Then, on December 28, Sharmila Khan was found dead in Mumbai. Another alley, another ten knives in her back. She was a corporate session musician, laying down synth track after synth track in brutal production-line fashion for countless trid flicks whose total production time, from conception to market, was three months. She was wearing a white top with a black skirt when she died, a color scheme similar to what Merritsen was wearing. Near her was a security gate with graffiti from the 405 Hellhounds.

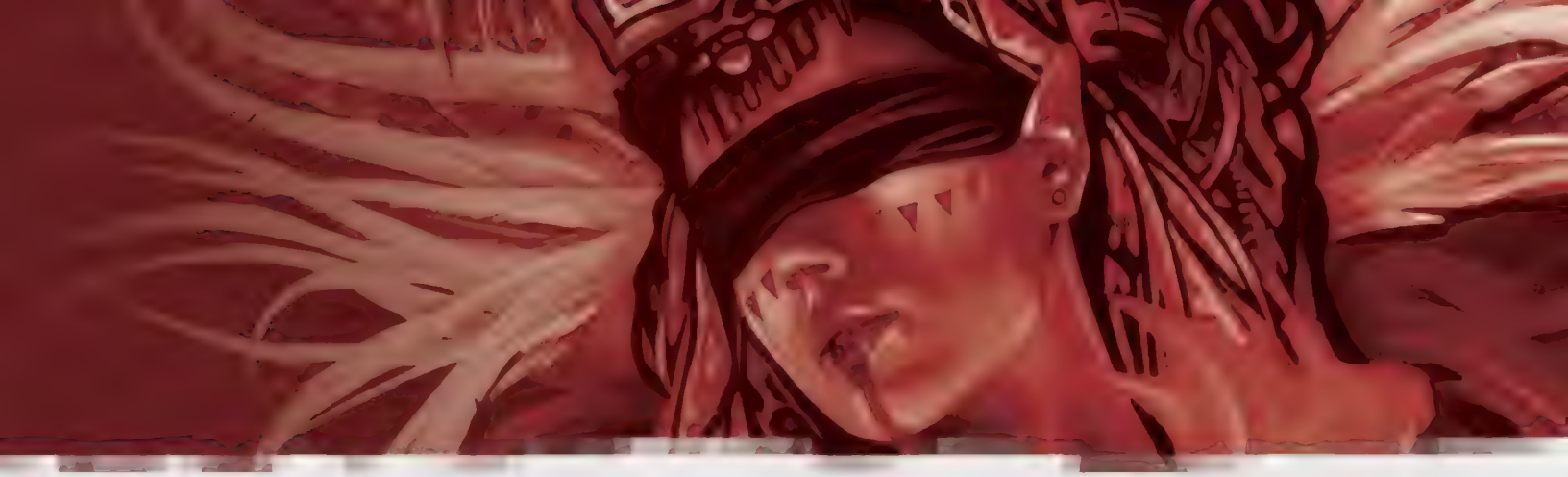
In each instance, at some point someone connected to the case mentioned the similarly to the image from the Ten of Blades, which is one of the more well-known images that has been circulating on the Matrix (several counterfeit cards have been manufactured by those with the proper know-how and a decent printer, though the line between counterfeit cards and the copies that seem to proliferate in ways no one understands is blurry and not one I am going to attempt to sort out right here). There were striking similarities in all three cases—namely, the alley, the number of knives, and the corporate connections of each victim. There are striking differences in each case—while the clothing of Merritsen and Khan matched the card, Xi was wearing something different. Of course, the victim on the card is female, while Merritsen was make. The graffiti in Khan's case differed from the card, and the "10¢ Store" sign was not on the wall next to any of the victims—though a similar inscription translates to "Yansha Outlets." The central point being that there are enough signifiers to connect each case to the card, but enough differences to make you wonder what's going on.

This brings us to the key questions. Were these killings foretold by the cards, or did the cards inspire the crimes? Or was the first one the one the cards foretold, and it then inspired two copycats? Or is the truth some combination of all these possibilities, or none of them, because this is the Sixth World, and no real excuse is needed for people to die in horrible violence?

This presents one of the key problems of Sixth World Tarot-related augury. There is a lot that happens in the world, and some of the cards represent the type of scene that happens thousands of times on a daily basis. How can the cards be used to divine events that will happen? How useful are they? Have people been successful in avoiding a negative event foretold by the cards, or in ensuring that a positive event went through (or perhaps was moved forward so it could be experienced faster)? Are the prophecies of the irrevocable and unalterable? If so, what good does it do for us to know them?

The sad part, of course, is that I am going to come nowhere close to answering all of those questions in this document, at least not definitively. But I'll hint at some answers and feint at others, and hope that will be enough. Isn't that how fortune telling always works, anyway?

To tackle how the cards serve the work of augurs, we'll cover two angles: the deck as tarot and the deck as prophetic images.



THE DECK AS TAROT

At its core, this is the simplest way to use the deck to attempt to foretell the future. After all, tarot cards have been used for this purpose for hundreds of years, and there is a vast body of literature that can explain how this works and the symbolism behind the cards. Dedicated readers can study all this elsewhere, so I'm going to focus on what makes the Sixth World Tarot distinct, and how that might inform readings.

THE BASTARD

(REPLACES THE FOOL)

The broadest strokes of interpretation between the Bastard and the Fool remain the same, but there are some differences in shading. The Bastard loses a certain innocence the Fool generally possesses. The Fool can learn and is often seen as a protagonist in a coming-of-age story or heroic journey; the Bastard is perhaps an anti-hero, or maybe just a force of chaos. Chaos, though, is not the same as evil, and it is often the source of significant opportunity.

- The face on the main character is all you need to know about how much innocence is lost, and how dangerous this card now is.
- Sunshine

THE MATRIX

(REPLACES THE MAGICIAN)

The Matrix brings the knowledge interpretation of the Magician to the fore; as the inverse, inaccuracies and mistakes are emphasized, since we are all familiar with the Matrix's ability to foster confusion. Don't think it's all about data, though—with the Matrix comes hackers, and with hackers comes the self-confidence to the point of delusion that we all know and love.

AES SÍDHE BANRÌGH

(REPLACES THE EMPRESS)

The meaning of this card doesn't shift, but the connections of this card to the leading faction of the Seelie Court makes people pay special attention when it comes up. The Seelie Queen is, to say the least, not open and transparent in her operations, so any avenue that might lead to information about how she and her faction function is quite welcome.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

(REPLACES THE EMPEROR)

In many ways, this is similar to the Aes Sídhe Banrìgh shift described above—the meaning stays essentially the same, but the chance to gain insight into megacorporate functioning through the cards is an irresistible lure to a large cross-section of Tarot users.

THE HIGHER POWER

(REPLACES THE HIEROPHANT)

The religious aspect of this card takes a nosedive in the Sixth World, while the economic aspect grows considerably. We all know what power makes our world go 'round, and that's what this card symbolizes more than any other aspect.

THE AVATARS

(REPLACES THE LOVERS)

This card has taken an interesting journey on its way to the Sixth World. Originally much more focused on marriage and family life, interpretations of the card broadened to include romantic love. But now that aspect seemingly has been left behind, as the card focuses on self-integration, building a strong center so that you can love. To some, this is a condemnation of our world, as it seems we have no room left for commitment to anyone who is not ourselves. To others, it is practicality—the world is hard enough to live in on your own, so you better get your drek together before you think about doing something for someone else.

THE RIDE

(REPLACES THE CHARIOT)

Honestly, very little changes for this card. The mode of transportation is updated, but the general meanings of succor, triumph, and progress remain the same.

DISCIPLINE

(REPLACES STRENGTH)

This is perhaps one of the most interesting shifts in the Sixth World Tarot. The image is actually consistent with older versions of the card, in that a woman is taming a lion. The basic implications are clear: This card addresses the power that the woman employed to bring the beast to heel. The difference is in the locus of that power. We all have strength of some form or another, the new card seems to say (which would be news to the millions of wageslaves in the world, but that's another discussion). The true difference between the strong and the weak, the card seems to be telling us, is not the degree of innate strength we have, but the effort we put into taming and controlling it. With this interpretation that we all have strength within us, this is perhaps the most optimistic card in the deck.

- It would be nice to think so, but in my experience the voices that talk the most about control and discipline are those who want to impose it on you, not those who want to help you find your own strength.
- Kane

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

The basics of this card, right down to the name, are unchanged from traditional decks. It's the illustration that makes the visceral impact, a revolver pointed at the viewer. The four visible chambers are empty, but two chambers are out of view. A flared red light lets the viewer know the laser sight is pointing right at their eyes. If there's a round in the topmost chamber, there's trouble. If there's not, maybe you get to live to see another day.

That's the Sixth World wheel of fortune. It's not a choice between multiple outcomes, different strokes of good or bad fortune that may lead to unique outcomes. It's the chance to maybe live another day until, finally, the round is in the chamber, and the chance is lost.

THE VIGILANTE

(REPLACES JUSTICE)

Does this even need explication? The concept of Justice seems laughable in the Sixth World. No one cares about it, and certainly no one goes out of their way to enforce it. The best you can do is extract payback on whatever terms you invent, which is what this card symbolizes.

... 404 ...

(REPLACES DEATH)

Initially this seems to be a benign change. Death is one of the most feared tarot cards, mainly because people do not understand it. It is the ending that brings new beginnings, but people can't help but forget about the be-

ginnings in their worries about the end. The replacement is less foreboding—we've all encountered the 404 code at some point in our Matrix wandering, generally multiple times. Death, of course, we encounter only once.

But look closer. In its ultimate symbolism, 404 is the death that goes beyond Death. It does not just extinguish. It annihilates. Something that should be there is not, and no trace is left. No marks, no memories. 404 is the ultimate erasure. It is the fate worse than death.

THRESHOLD

(REPLACES TEMPERANCE)

This is perhaps the most significant wholesale change of a card. Threshold and Temperance are both concerned with matters of balance but have little else in common. Temperance traditionally has significant religious denotations, and organized religion is not always the strong motivator in the Sixth World that it once was. Threshold, instead, focuses on the element that is at the core of most religions: enlightenment. The goal is to manage what you have in order to be something else, to cross borders separating what you are from what you could be.

THE DRAGON

(REPLACES THE DEVIL)

Is any explanation needed?

THE COMET

(REPLACES THE STAR)

The essential interpretations of this card remain unchanged, but this one difference is worth pointing out: Comets don't sit still.

THE SHADOWS

(REPLACES THE MOON)

This is the card that always gets our attention when it shows up in readings, because it might has well just be labeled "home"—which, of course, is something the moon never was to anyone in pre-Sixth World days. When this card shows up in readings involving runners, we sit up and pay attention.

THE ECLIPSE

(REPLACES THE SUN)

The main purpose of this particular change is to drive home the fact that we can't have nice things. One of the happiest cards in the traditional tarot deck has shifted to one representing anxiety and need. This shift, along with changes to the Wheel of Fortune, lead many to ask where augurs of good fortune can come from in this deck. Generally the only answer they receive is a resigned expression.

KARMA

(REPLACES JUDGMENT)

There are surprisingly few changes in the meaning of this card. The main difference is the actor delivering an individual's reward. Many traditional tarot decks and interpretations hold to some higher power, a guiding force that will impose their judgment on the world. In the Sixth World, there is less hope of some magician behind the scenes who will eventually come out and make things right. Instead, there is the faint hope that what goes around will occasionally come around.

THE AWAKENED WORLD

(REPLACES THE WORLD)

Very little shift in meaning here, but the associations of this card with successful efforts means that this offers one faint sliver of hope. It's more than nothing.

BATONS

(REPLACES WANDS)

As is common throughout the Sixth World Tarot, many interpretations became secularized. Thus the aspect of the Wands suit that focused on things such as the divine spark in metahumans has shifted to drive, creativity, and will. If you want a spark, you have to ignite it yourself.

SUMMARY

While Pentacles shifts to Coins and Swords to Blades, the core meanings of these suits remain unchanged.

In the end, the shifts in the deck are understandable, because they reflect the ways in which our world has changed. We are less optimistic, less spiritually inclined, more urgent, and more doomed. The deck did what any good augur did—it responded to the world around it.

THE DECK AS PROPHETIC IMAGES

It's all fine and good to use the Sixth World Tarot as a tarot deck, but to use it *only* in that capacity is missing much of the deck's potential. Every single card that has been viewed on the astral plane has an aura; these are enchanted items, not just nice pictures. The nature of the magic behind the cards is uncertain, but the common assumption is that the magic is tied to divining, because that fits the profile of tarot cards. The most significant way the cards may augur the future is as a simple window to the future, showing events that are going to happen. There's a trick to it, because of course there is—sometimes the events it predicts happen exactly as predicted, while other times, as in the Ten of

Blades examples discussed above, events similar to but not exactly identical to the cards appear. Do the predictions have to be exact to matter? In the case of the various Ten of Blades cases, probably the last thing the victims were worried about were the particulars of their surroundings—the ten knives in their backs were ten similarities too many.

With that said, here are some other ways people have worried about the images foretelling the future—and the ways some of them have.

STRAIGHTFORWARD IMAGERY

Predictably, two types of images get the most attention: those that might foretell extraordinary good fortune, and those that might foretell doom. I can't cover all the possibilities here, but I'll provide a summary of some cards and items people look to as predictions of the future.

THE BASTARD

This is an image that gets plenty of people curious and nervous, given that the central figure is one of significant renown (and infamy) in the shadows. The face of the figure in distress in this picture can be seen, with enough detail to see that it appears to be a Caucasian male, but its features are vague enough that literally millions of people might believe that the victim could conceivably be them.

- Fun fact: I have encountered about a dozen people on the Matrix who have grown a beard as an easy way of convincing themselves that the person in this image cannot be them.
- Netcat

There is significant debate about whether this is the type of image that might come to life multiple times. On the one hand, this seems like a distinct image—the Laughing Man does not make many public appearances, and one of this nature would surely be a one-off affair. On the other hand, the clown is exactly that type of person who might enjoy throwing multiple people out of a window.

- But let's get into the important question: What's up with the dog?
- Mika

- It's a puzzle. It neither looks like it jumped out on purpose nor like it is surprised or alarmed at its fall. Nothing resembling it turns up anywhere else in the deck.
- Jimmy No

- The dog is a Papillon, a toy spaniel beloved by Continental royalty back when Continental royalty had power of note, and included in many Renaissance paintings, especially by Titian. Legend says Marie Antoinette carried such a dog to her execution, but the dog was spared. So what we see plummeting out the window is the lapdog of royalty, its paws seemingly stained with blood. It all seems very Harlequin-esque.
- Fianchetto

The upshot is simple: Harlequin is going to mess things up. Just who or what he will mess up is open for discussion, but his appearance in the deck is enough to send many people scrambling for more answers.

THE HERMIT

While the card does not seem to predict any one particular event, many people are quite interested in finding out who this individual is and who to meet him. The very obvious power he carries—a combination of conventional and mystical arms—inspires interest, and the fact that the Hermit is transitionally and outsider and iconoclast draws the interest of those who would like to upset various existing orders. Who he is and where he may be found is the subject of much speculation but little certainty.

- He's also either a rigger or has rigger support—don't overlook that bug drone on his staff.
- Rigger X

- I hear he's Scandinavian, possibly of the pleasant strain of Aesir (that is, the non-white-supremicist kind). These guys warned about Winternight before Crash 2.0 went down, so they seem to have tapped into some powerful divination streams.
- Mika

- Just because a guy's got a braided beard doesn't make him Aesir. He's a freelance reagent hunter, though he does a lot of contract work for the Draco Foundation. He's been making a lot of trips to the Seelie Court since the Yellowstone gateway opened up.
- Frosty

THE TOWER

This is a clear attention-grabber, with lightning hitting the Seattle Space Needle while it burns in flames that may not be hot enough to bring it down but are certainly enough to cause problems. Is this a symbol, auguring future trouble for Seattle by depicting its most famous symbol in flames? Or is it prophecy, telling us about a disaster that will eventually be all too real? The Seattle government is not willing to take chances, and they have begun quietly sending some cash into the shadows in order to find out what might lead to this disaster.

- The lightning, of course, would not cause the fire on its own—designers of buildings like the Space Needle know how to deal with electrical strikes. Most interpreters believe the lightning is either symbolic of peril or representative of magic being used to attack the building. Or just coincidental, but it's not wise to dismiss elements of the Tarot that casually.
- Elijah

KARMA

The ill-fated runner in this picture certainly seems like he could be a prophecy, with one gunman closing on him from behind, more than a dozen laser-sight dots on his chest, and a grenade in his hands. Is the grenade to take out the opposition or take himself out before his opponents can? It definitely seems like a fate people would want to avoid, but here's one of the grim truths of shadowrunning: Every shadowrunner has imagined themselves in this situation, and so would not be terribly shocked to find themselves in it. Disappointed, yes, but not shocked.

THE CASE WITH FIVE STARS

(KNIGHT OF BATONS, TWO OF CUPS, SIX OF COINS, NINE OF COINS)

The case with five stars is one of the deck's intriguing enigmas. It's clearly an object of desire, with four different possessors on four different cards, but the nature of its content or worth are completely unknown. On three of the cards, the possessors seem to be individuals of no great wealth, but there is one individual who attracts attention. He appears on both the Nine of Coins and Two of Cups, and he is in better shape on the former. He is on the arm of a woman who is dressed to impress, with a hairstyle of spikes and loops that would take a team of stylists and a truckload of spray to pull off. The case is held by a little girl who is assumed to be with them (though the connection between the couple and the girl is not entirely clear). That man is later robbed of the case by the couple standing in the background of the Nine of Coins.

The point is, if the case is to be found, many people believe the man needs to be identified. A database of 153 leading candidates has circulated among Tarot theorists; I expect that number to increase. Then—and I guarantee this will happen—people will start checking out each candidate, one by one, to see if they can find the case.

- It's an easy guarantee to make, as it's already started. A man resembling the person in the card has been spotted in Santa Monica, working for Horizon. He's under twenty-four-hour surveillance.
- Sunshine
- Here's the big question: Who's paying for the surveillance?
- Kat o' Nine Tales

The exact sequence of the cards, if they are indeed a prophetic story, is not clear. Some surmise that the Knight of Batons may be the last card in the sequence—or even if it's not, the case may well spend significant time in Knight Errant custody. Thus some hackers are keeping an eye on Knight Errant evidence registries, hoping that the case may show up when the prophecies start to come to pass. The woman on Nine of Coins (who also appears in the background of the Knight of Cups, which indicates the two cards might refer to the same event) has a very distinctive style. Rather than looking for the woman herself, observers have taken to studying her dress and other fashion elements, namely her hair, to identify where this event is, and then possibly identify the woman through her stylists. There are about a million designers who design black evening gowns, but some observers have fixated on the teardrop-shaped lined cape that flows out behind her. SaederLine has put a lot of capes into their formalwear lately, and Vashon Island has been into capes for pretty much their whole existence. So if you're a fashion designer who likes capes, get ready—you're gonna get a lot of visits and weird calls from people who want to learn from you but don't necessarily want to talk directly to you.

The focus of all the interest, though, is the case, so some observers figure if you want to figure out the cards, find the case. It's been observed that the case is most likely an ammunition case. Most ammo cases are defiantly no-frills—there is a large body of firearms aficionados who feel that any ammo case that is not olive drab with yellow letters is unbearably fancy. The relatively fancy (though also battered) star case likely was not mass manufactured—at least, observers have not found such a model from recent years. It's probably a custom job, so you know where that leads—to people tracking down custom ammo case shops. The condition of the case shows that it has been through a lot, though we have the dilemma of not knowing when the events in the cards are taking place—the case may be new now, with wear and tear in its future. That future may not be far off, as ammo cases often go through conditions that age them fast. All of this is to say that no one has any idea when such a custom case would have been made. As you can imagine, this uncertainty has not led to any clear leads.

What's in the case? That's a commonly asked question with no good answer. Some people speculate it's a new form of armor-piercing ammo or something, but that sort of thinking is rejected quickly. How boring would it be for an ammo case to actually hold ammo? If the Tarot can be said to have a distinct style, that sort of straightforwardness doesn't seem to fit it. Once the speculation moves away from ammo, it becomes incredibly broad. Could

the case hold a dragon egg? The Piri Reis map? The Ring of Gyges? A list of all of Lofwyr's Matrix passwords? A chip containing all known scans of technomancer brains? The possibilities are endless—and without clear evidence from the cards, all we have is speculation.

- But oh what beautiful speculation it is. My favorite? The case contains an early twentieth century Sweet Caporal Honus Wagner baseball card, worth five million nuyen or so.
- Slamm-0!

THE FIVE OF CUPS

If you haven't had a nightmare that looks a lot like the image on this card, you haven't been running long. The run that ends in total disaster, team members falling, DocWagon approaching but moving much slower than the hail of bullets raining on you. You can try to move, you can try to escape, but each step tells you your efforts will fail.

It's not a happy fate, of course, so runner teams across the world are anxious to avoid the future this card sets out. That means runners who have studied the card will avoid any hints of a run connected to it. If you call yourself "The Collector," good luck finding runners willing to work for you—the appearance of that handle on the large ARO in the background has plenty of runners wanting nothing to do with those words. Same goes for any individuals or companies named "Shikakwa" (though I have yet to encounter a corp by that name). Then we get into the smaller details. Many people have tried to identify the apparent tartan the troll is wearing—perhaps the closest match is a tartan adopted by the state of Illinois. What this means is up to interpretation, but to some people it means staying the hell out of Chicago (because that's the only part of Illinois they know).

Then there's the elk skull on the woman toward the right-hand side of the picture. In some Amerindian cultures, the elk symbolizes companionship or relationships, though the glowing eyes give this skull a decidedly sinister appearance. Is this a sign of companionship gone bad, or possible betrayal? It at least has plenty of runners who might be working on rooftops in the near future re-assessing their relationships to make sure those closest to them can be trusted.

THE MAN WITH PURPLE HAIR

This character, who has a distinct aversion to shirts, has been spotted twice: In the background of what appears to be a slaughterhouse brawl on the Five of Batons, and in a more contemplative pose on the King of Blades, this time with blue paint over his eyes. While he seems calm in the latter picture, there are symbols of chaos and power around him, and an angel statue overlooking him has a downright panicked expression on her face. To many observers, the purple-haired man is a sign of chaos. Even if he seems calm when you first encounter him, be prepared—there's a good chance the calm will not last long. And if you see purple hair in a slaughterhouse, look out.

THE MULTI-ARMED MAN

We see this particular gentleman, with four arms, standing in waist-deep water and looking angry on the Comet card. Then a man with six arms is being clubbed on Seven of Batons. It is not at all clear that these two individuals are the same person. As noted, the number of arms is different, and the six-armed has several tattoos that are not at all visible on the on the four-armed man. The six-armed man's face is difficult to see, so it is not clear if there is any real resemblance to the figure on the Comet. Still, both men have more than the customary two arms, and for that reason they are tied together.

They also both do not seem to be content with their position. To some observers, this means the appearance of a multi-armed man is a good omen, as long as he is not on your side, as he seems destined to suffering. So a small but growing number teams is happy to see a multi-armed man as they do their work, as they think it will mean good things for them.

- Remember that the modifications he sports are called Shiva arms, so he could very well be a reference to the Hindu god Shiva, god of destruction and rebirth, endings and beginnings.
- Goat Foot

THE TRIPLETS

The Avatars cards displays three young women; one is dominated by the color blue, a second tends toward red, while the third is distinctly green. The blue woman appears to be on the verge of kissing the red one, who also bears the lip prints of the green woman on her left cheek.

Three young women also appear on the Three of Cups. Their dominant colors are blue, white, and red. The red woman on on this card may be the same as the red woman on the Avatars, and the white woman may be the same as the Avatars' blue woman. The Three of Cups blue woman seems to be different from any woman on the previous card. As is the case with the Avatars card, the three women share a closeness and intimacy. On this card, they are also holding drinks.

The exact image from the Three of Cups forms part of the background of the King of Cups. The king himself sits behind a large, full martini glass into which shell casings are dropping. There is a fourth woman near the triplets, whose clothing (what there is of it) is black.

So what should we divine from the appearances of these women? Groups of three women are common in mythology, such as the Fates, the Furies, and the Norns, but these women seem too young and joyful to fit in either group. However, the appearance of the woman in black on the King of Cups, along with the possible dif-

ferences between the Avatars and Three of Cups, mean that focusing on the number three might be misguided. And the alluring, rather hedonistic nature of the women point to another identity—that of Sirens.

What that means as far as augury is tricky. The fact that various temptations might pop up in the Sixth World is not news, and thus does not have much value as a prediction. The focus, though, is on the men who appear on the Three of Cups and King of Cups. Should you encounter men who look like that, be aware that they might offer temptation with the goal of leading you do some dangerous shoals.

SYMBOLIC IMAGERY

The symbols have already been covered in detail in the remarks by Hansu Mitoritsu in the **Items and Objects** post (p. 36). The symbolic readings he offers can provide good guidance as to what the future might bring, especially if a skilled reader is focusing on how the cards combine. Here are a few broad strokes to add to Mitoritsu's work.

WHITE ROSES

Seen in cards like the Bastard and ...404..., white roses often symbolize innocence, purity, and true love—three things in short supply in the Sixth World. In augury terms, one should not look at the appearance of a white rose as a promise of finding love or any such storefront psychic bulldrek. Instead, look at it as a motivator—the person holding it might be dedicated to some concept of love.

- The white rose was also the symbol of the House of York in the War of the Roses. I'm sure that fact will be useful to someone somewhere.
- Sunshine

MARKS ON PALMS

Different marks appear on palms in different ways across the deck. Some of these have meanings in palmistry—a star on the palm is said to represent unusual ability or skill, while a diamond represents an interest in exploring new subjects. One individual (on the Four of Coins) has a heart on her palm, which is not a symbol customarily used in palmistry, as it is not a shape that typically appears on palms. This could be a representation of the heart line, which demonstrates an individual's attitude and openness toward love. Outside of palmistry, the heart-in-hand symbol represents charity.

GUNS VS. BLADES

It should come as no surprise that an object representing life in the Sixth World is full of weapons. A key part of our lives is worrying about how everyone we might see might be planning to kill us, then worrying about how they might be worrying that we're trying to kill them, so they might just take the initiative and try to kill us first. Honestly, how a shootout doesn't erupt daily in every public place in the world is a mystery to me. But I digress. Weapons, of course, are generally a symbol of strength or power, or a desire for power, but some interesting aspects can be explored when you consider cards displaying firearms and cards displaying blades.

When you drive down to the finer points, though, some differences appear. Guns, of course, act faster than swords (I know, I know, you blades experts are all getting ready to talk about how fast on the draw you are, and how a prepared swordsman can get the drop on anyone, no matter what they're wielding, but I'd like to remind you that we're talking about averages here, and then I will kindly request that you shut up for a minute). That makes them more likely to serve as a symbol of anger and the need to control it. Blades, on the other hand, often carry a symbolic meaning of judgment and decisiveness. The sword of Damocles is a representation of the perils of power, but when you hold that sword, you are the bringer of that danger, the carrier of judgment.

This can lead to some interesting interpretations. The Vigilante, for example, wields both anger and judgment. The gun sitting on the ground in ... 404 ... symbolizes putting aside anger, even if only temporarily. The sword in the hands of Knight of Blades indicates the decisiveness of that character, the fact that they have chosen a clear path for themselves and are determined to follow it. The array of firearms near the bottom of the Three of Coins card symbolizes the full range of power available to the central character, the actions he can choose to get what

he wants. They also, though, can be the range of impulses he need to control to stay in his position of power.

- The variety of blades have also been a subject of study. From the machete-like short sword in the hands of The Vigilante to the longswords on the Two of Blades to the many, many katanas in a variety of colors strewn throughout the deck, the deck doubles as an encyclopedia of swordcraft. As anyone who has used a blade knows, each weapon has its own characteristics, even personality. The more you understand the different fighting styles the various depicted weapons, the better you will be able to untangle the symbolism the blades convey.
- Fianchetto

THE DECK'S ROLE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE

Spoiler alert: We're not going to come to a clear conclusion on whether the Tarot foretells an inevitable future, shapes that future, or points in a direction that may or may not happen. I trust diviners to know their art, though, and experts I trust tell me that the Sixth World Tarot is one of the more useful and accurate items when it comes to obtaining useful readings. They may not know how it works, and they often don't care—the fact that it works is all they really need to know.

With that said, here are some ways people are using the Tarot to get a glimpse of the future so that they may either run toward it or flee.

PROVIDING WARNINGS

This is perhaps the most common way the cards are used to predict the future. From the dead bodies on cards such as the Page of Blades, the Ten of Blades, or the Three of Blades, or dire situations such as the ones on The Tower, Karma, or the Five of Batons, there are several images that people do not want to find themselves in the middle of. People press for details in these cards, looking to identify particular individuals to help give some specificity to the predictions. This, of course, is complicated by reports of shifting images and changing faces, but that just adds complication, rather than causes deterrence. Unsurprisingly, people will go to great lengths to avoid lying face-down in an alley with an astounding collection of blades in your back.

There are subtler warnings besides the prospects of immediate harm. The woman in the Nine of Cups appears to be in a miserable state—who she is and how she came to that state are common topics of discussion. The salamanders on the King of Batons seem to have set a good portion of the forest on fire while a sad sasquatch looks on in seeming sorrow. The scope of the devastation of this fire, and whether it will cause harm to sasquatch settlement, are the subjects of much speculation (including whether it connects to the background of the Page of Coins). The break-in occurring in what looks like a biology lab on the Eight of Coins is another cause for alarm—what is growing there, and in whose hands does it end up? A world where VITAS and HMHVV still run rampant is a world where justifiable nerves about biological weapons will continue. Note that the Four of Blades is often connected to this card, and many people have scanned its medical details looking for information on just what is ailing the woman in the foreground. Searches for Valkyr, Inc. have also skyrocketed.

- It's unwise to be too limited. Valkyr might be a company, but it also might be a reference. There are about two dozen listed names of valkyries in poems and mythology, and the company name on the card could actually be referring to a company where one or more such-named people work in high-ranking positions. NeoNET, Maersk, Saeder-Krupp, and AG Chemie are all worth a look.
- Cosmo.

PROVIDING INSPIRATION

Sometimes the augury offered by the cards is not negative; rather, it presents something to aspire to, something that tells you what you can obtain. Perhaps the most notable of these is the gold coin depicted on the Ace of Coins, labeled with the words "50 million Euros." That is, of course, a lot of money. The coin is utterly impractical, as transporting it would be a nightmare, but the fact that it might exist has led many people to speculate as to how they can locate the room where it sits, so that perhaps some chunks may be broken off.

The Queen of Cups offers one of the most purely beautiful images of the deck, and certainly one of the most peaceful. Between the value of the cup in front of the picture and the symbolic wisdom of the owl whispering in the woman's ear, many people are eager to find the future this card predicts and live in it. Or at least learn what the owl is saying.

Then there is the red-carpet affair on both the Knight of Cups and Nine of Coins seems as if it would be a target-rich environment, full of people and objects of value. There is substantial interest in finding out when and where that event takes place.

Then there is the Nine of Blades. In the foreground, a woman kneels, hands clasped, while she weeps. It is a pose that looks like begging, but she does not seem impoverished—her hair, dress, and overall appearance speak of a general material well-being. She is not, most likely, seeking aid from the suit-wearing individuals walking away from her. Possibly they are the ones who delivered the news that sent her into her sorrow; perhaps they are simply hurrying to where they need to go and not willing to let her problems slow them down. Either way, it is a scene of some urgency, as nine aircraft or drones streak downward at a dangerous angle, seemingly aimed at the terminal—though possibly not, for

while the people in suits seem busy, they do not seem panicked. They are walking briskly but not running. Still, even if it isn't an attack, the sight of nine craft rushing downward in the way these are moving is unusual, and many take alarm at the sight. To them, it is the sight of war. This picture has been studied in detail for any hints as to where and when such a conflict might break out.

- A few clues are obvious. The airport signage is in English; there seems to be a Renraku facility just outside. Sea-Tac has a building like that just outside the terminal. So does Vancouver. The architecture of the terminal has been closely studied, but a hallway under arching glass is not as distinct as interpreters might like.
- Traveler Jones

- Literalists. You'll be the death of me. The nine aircraft are placed in the sky to have their emissions look like blades. They are there to live up to the name of the card, and that's it. They aren't to be taken as actual planes. Geez.
- Lyran

- It is unwise to firmly state what the Tarot cannot be. Or insist that it only be one thing.
- Man-of-Many-Names

FEEDING THE COPYCATS

Now we get to the people who take the Tarot proactively. They are not waiting to find what the Tarot displays—they are trying to make the images happen. As long, of course, as they can figure out a way to make some cash in the act.

Some of it is obvious—find someone who looks like someone victimized on one of the cards, show an image to them, and promise to protect them. Then stage an attack that looks like the one in the card, save the mark, and tell them you changed the future. Piece of cake.

- I know of people in three different cities who have set up alleys to look just like the one on the Ten of Blades so they can keep staging rescues there. They either find people who look like the elf on the card, or they do some graphic manipulation so that a range of faces appear. They are also active in fanning flames of Tarot speculation on various Matrix sites, because the more people know about the Tarot, the more nervous they'll become, and the more prospective clients they'll have.
- Thorn

- The Tarot is often more subtle than we give it credit for. What the Ten of Blades may be predicting is not so much a single event, but the repeated events you are describing.
- Arete

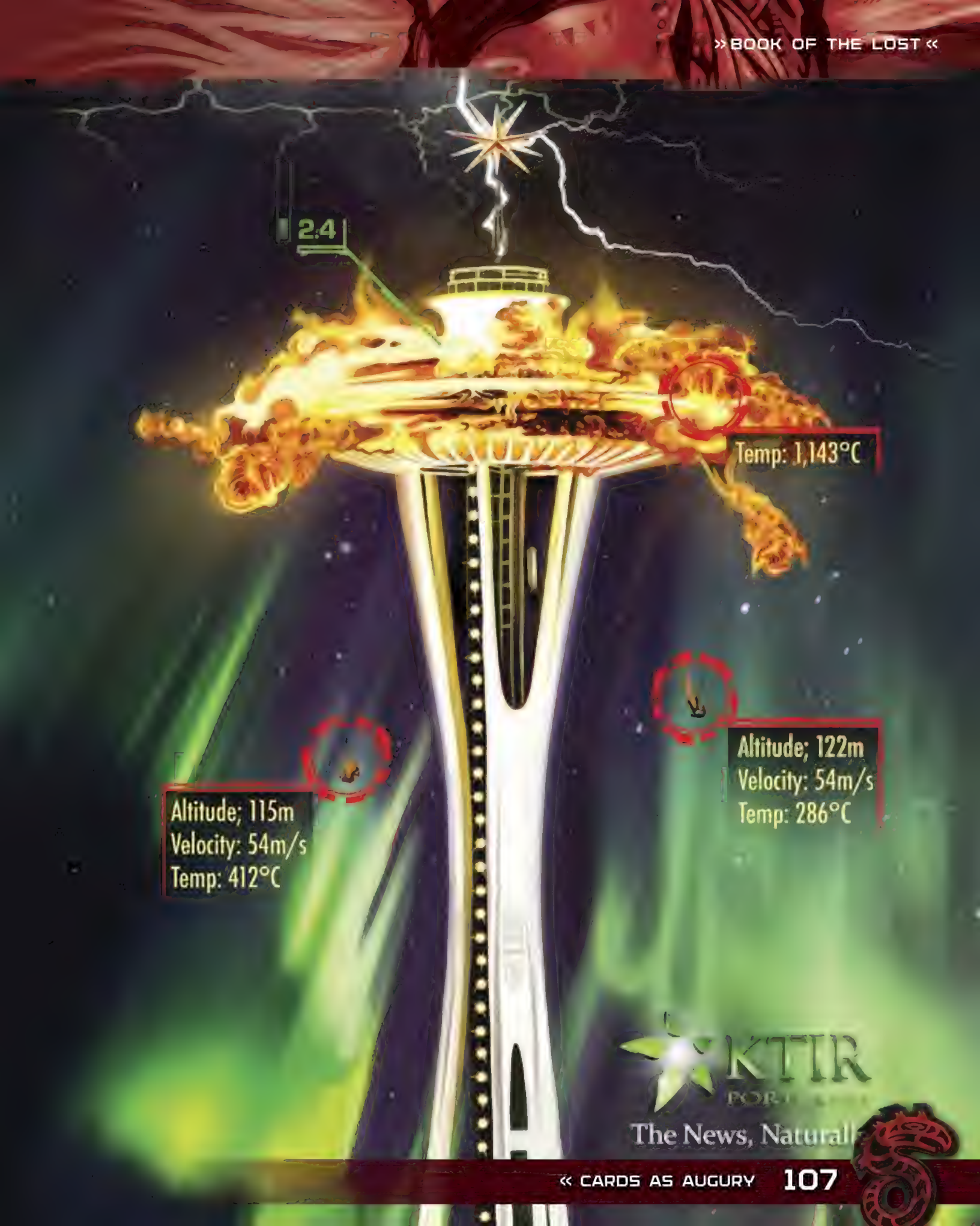
Then you have the blinded woman on the Two of Blades. While she has a savage cut across her eyes, she still has a ferocious, capable look about her. Whether with illusion spells or competent makeup, some people have taken to adjusting their appearance to match the woman, then stalking around shadowy areas of the world at night. Once word starts to spread of these appearances, people become eager to contact this woman, possibly engage her services. She keeps her distance for a time, weighs her offer, then agrees to some work—typically whatever job offers the most money in advance. Then she is never seen in that area again.

At least, that was the early gambit. Lately, in Atlanta and Oslo, a woman matching the Two of Blades image has been accepting jobs and then completing them with notable efficiency. In Oslo, the woman (known to locals as Hylda) works alone; in Atlanta, she has been seen with a woman who resembles the image on the Queen of Batons, who is said to have Matrix skills. Some say these women emerge as a fulfillment of the vision of the Tarot; others say they are exploiting it. No one, though, denies there is a connection.

The Page of Batons has provided useful opportunities for some enterprising summoners. With a copy of the image from the card in hand, these summoners visit banks, corps, or anyone likely to have a large vault, show them the image, and discuss with them the value of having a spirit of fire guarding their precious belongings. It doesn't always work—often, these people already have way better security than some hustling runners can scare up—but a few contracts have been made. Be aware of that if you plan on breaking into vaults any time soon—your chances of encountering fire spirits have significantly increased.

Finally, we have the Four of Batons, a blissful image of a magical gathering or love-in or rave or *something* happening at the Taj Mahal. With the colors, the joy, and lightning striking through breaking clouds, this is an image many people want to see come to pass, so they are working to make it happen. One interesting aspect is that this appears to be a nighttime image, but most days the grounds are not open to the public at night—visitors can enter only on the two days before and after the full moon. This means that lately, the site has been inundated by nighttime visitors on these days wishing to make their own version of the party on the card. They're having a lot of fun, but the significance of the gathering that be sufficient for it to be depicted on the cards is an open question.

- Most of these gatherings are nothing more than raucous parties—not that there's anything wrong with that, but as Jimmy points out, it's possibly not worthy of being depicted on the card. The fact that these gatherings are occurring are leading mages in the area to believe that the magic gathering shown on the card is approaching, so they're starting to show up in greater numbers. If the pace keeps up, the imitation could well become the real thing.
- Red Anya


2.4
Temp: 1,143°C
Altitude; 122m
Velocity: 54m/s
Temp: 286°C
Altitude; 115m
Velocity: 54m/s
Temp: 412°C
KTIR
The News, Naturall

POWER OF THE CARDS

The cards of the Tarot are not the magic items of other games that provide a boost to your character simply by possessing them. These are items of great power that will come to a character when their story needs it, and there will always be a price to pay for the power they provide. This is still *Shadowrun*; everything still has a price.

That said, this is also your game. If you want to use this deck to give your players a chance to do things that change the world or allow them some supermetahuman abilities, go for it. Just remember, no teleportation in *Shadowrun* (unless you *really* want teleportation in *Shadowrun,* because it's your—no, strike that. No teleportation in *Shadowrun,* dammit). The powers and abilities discussed here are not the be-all, end-all of all the powers the Tarot may contain. They are examples of what can be done with the Tarot, giving gamemasters something to build on.

SETS OF FOUR

The first grouping we'll look at that may unleash some powers of the deck is when four of a kind are gathered together. Simply having them in the same place is generally not enough to activate them; typically, a ritual of some kind must be performed. The exact nature of many of the rituals is up to the gamemaster, allowing them to create interesting challenges for their players.

TWOS

This ritual can be performed by any number of individuals. Successful completion creates a double of one subject. The abilities and quality of the doubles depend on the number of net hits from the ritual. A single hit creates an empty shell with no autonomy. It can be moved and controlled through the thoughts of the subject it matches, up to a range of (ritual Force x 100) meters. Two or three hits gives the double the ability to walk around and talk as if they are the subject, along with a mental connection between the subject and their double so they can be aware of what the double is doing. The double can't solve complex problems, have complex conversations, or use their skills. With three or four hits, the double can do all of the previously listed abilities and can also use all of the skills and attributes of the subject at half the ranks the subject possesses, rounded up. At five or more hits, the double is an exact match, with full skills, attributes, gear, and other abilities. All doubles can be controlled by the subject if they shift all their effort to the double, meaning they take a -6 dice pool penalty on any tests made that involve themselves rather than the double.

A glitch in the ritual makes the double work against the subject in subtle ways. They are also no longer controllable.

A critical glitch creates an exact match double that immediately attacks the subject or breaks free to wreak havoc on the subject's life.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform and lasts for (Force) hours.

THREES

This ritual must be performed with three individuals. Successful completion creates an effect similar to the Mindlink spell between all three individuals. The connection has no range limitations and lasts for (net hits) days.

A glitch on the roll results in less control over the Mindlink, meaning occasional unplanned thoughts slip through.

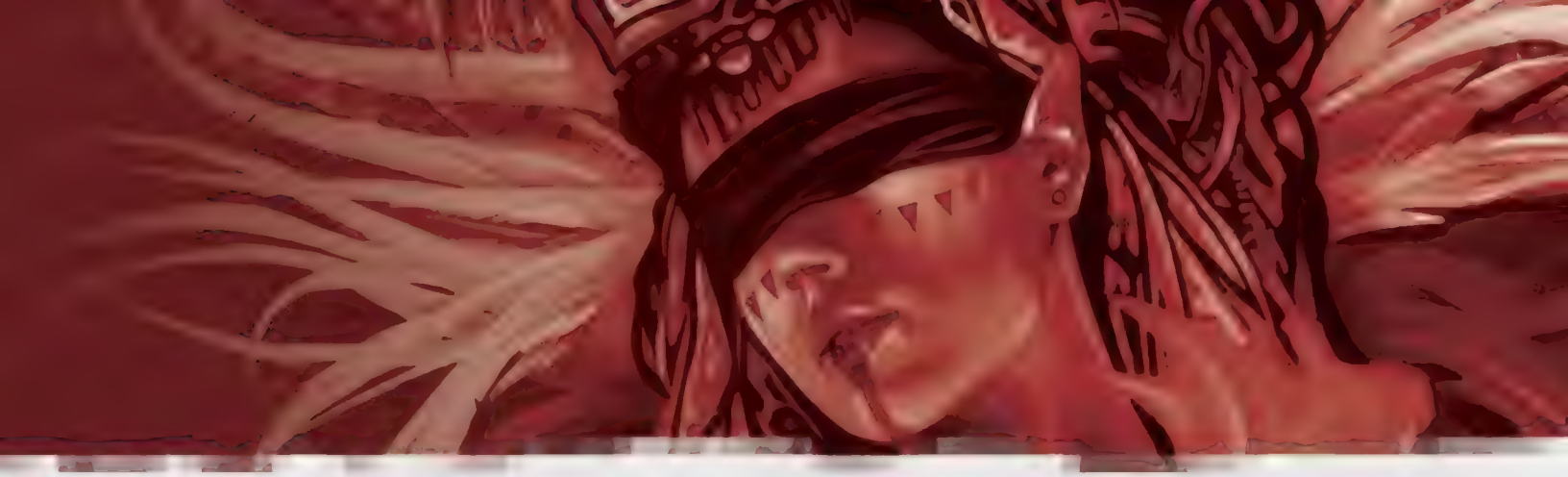
A critical glitch means the subject has almost no control over the Mindlink and constantly receives information from the others.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

FOURS

This ritual can include up to four individuals. Successful completion creates a number of vials equal to the number of participants. The vial contains a "love potion" with a number of doses equal to the number of hits on the Ritual Test. Anyone who ingests the potion becomes a Contact with a Loyalty of 3 for the leader of the ritual. Multiple doses do not increase or change the effect.

Glitches and critical glitches cause the potion to have the opposite effect and creates individuals who despise the subject and seek to do them harm. Characters should roll a Charisma + Willpower (3) Test; any failure or



glitch means the character who drank the potion should be treated as if they have a Vendetta (p. 159, *Run Faster*) against the character who gave them the potion.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

FIVES

The ritual must be performed with four participants. Successful completion opens up one of the listed boons to each participant. The participants must have a Magic Rating (natch, since they're participating in a ritual), but they do not need to be adepts to gain the boon. The boons are granted for a week. No character can receive an additional boon while still benefiting from an ongoing boon.

Adrenaline Boost (5 levels; 1/2 Drain); Cool Resolve (5 levels); Danger Sense (5 levels); Supernatural Toughness (5 levels)

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

SIXES

This ritual can be performed with up to twelve participants. Successful completion allows each participant to take on the appearance of one of the people depicted on the cards. Failing the ritual makes appearance assignments random. One net hit allows the participants to narrow the random options to one of the cards. Two net hits or more allow control over assignments. The change is a complete physical transformation. The new form uses the average Physical attributes for their race (two points above the racial minimum); Mental attributes and skills stay the same. The effect lasts for (Force) days

A glitch makes some aspect permanent after the ritual time runs out (scars, changed hair color, tusks, etc.).

A critical glitch makes the change permanent.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

SEVENS

This ritual is limited to a maximum of four participants. Successful completion of the ritual grants each participant one of the following boons. Increase Edge by 1 (1 month); Increase Sneaking skill by 1 (permanent); ownership of 100 shares of Sky Brides stock (permanent); Shiva arms (1 month; see p. 118, *Run Faster*). No matter how many participants there are in the ritual, each person can gain only one boon. Boons may be selected by the participant, but each participant must receive a different boon. No character can receive an additional boon while still benefitting from an ongoing boon. That means that if you receive a permanent boon, you cannot benefit from this ritual again.

During the one-month time limit for the Edge boost and Shiva arms, the character receives additional options. The character with the Edge increase can make it a permanent increase for only half the normal Karma it would take to raise their Edge attribute to the boosted level. The Shiva arms can be made permanent by traveling to Shanghai and getting tattoos on the new arms that match the tattoos on the Seven of Batons.

So, who's asking "What's Sky Brides?" right about now? It's up to you. This could just be a valuable little start-up that the participant is now invested in; it could be an intelligence firm that now acts as a contact for the participant as long as they keep their shares; it could be a Matrix company that offers mail-order spouses for 100 shares of stock. Have fun!

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

EIGHTS

This ritual is limited to a maximum of four participants. Successful completion of the ritual grants each participant one of the following boons. A pet bastet (technocritter cat, permanent; see *Howling Shadows*, p. 145); Special Elemental Weapon Ability (1 month; see below); pathogen and toxin resistance (permanent); codes for an air strike (1 use). Boons may be selected by the participant, but each participant must receive a different boon. No character can receive an additional boon while still benefitting from an ongoing boon. That means that if you receive a permanent boon, you cannot benefit from this ritual again.

The bastet is a technocritter cat that decides it wants to follow the participant. The bastet will arrive some time in the few days after the ritual and will likely be a domestic species; generally player characters should not have a bastet lion following them around. Note that while the

bastet might be fun for characters to have along, it's not all roses and sunshine—they can bring in some chaos that could negatively affect the player characters.

The Special Elemental Weapon Ability allows characters to infuse any handheld weapon with an elemental effect. This includes projectile weapons, throwing weapons, and guns (yup, guns). The ability functions similar to the adept power on p. 170 of *Street Grimoire* with the following variations: First, it doesn't require a weapon focus; second, Essence can be substituted for Magic in related tests; third, the elemental effect is up to the gamemaster and should be based on where the ritual is performed; and fourth, once set, the ability stays with the weapon, not the subject.

Toxin and pathogen resistance means the character receives a permanent +2 dice pool bonus to resist toxins and pathogens.

Codes for an air strike is a strange and devastating boon. The participant receives a (heavily encrypted, with a separate decryption key) commlink message that says "Air Strike available," and a trigger icon is added to their display. When activated, the trigger brings up a map program with a message that says, "Select target and level of devastation." The map allows a location to be selected as the center, and then an adjustable blast-zone area appears. The smallest blast zone has a twenty-meter radius, and the largest has a five-hundred-meter radius. The blast zone adjusts based on the terrain, and the software warns the user of potential risks to structures in the blast zone. Several additional warnings appear before a launch icon appears. This is a chance for the player to apply some common sense and second thoughts, while the gamemaster perhaps offers gentle nudges to avoid anything overly disastrous. Once the launch button is hit, an air strike is performed by an unknown entity as missiles bombard the area, devastating everything. While the message was encrypted, there is a chance that the signals for the strike could be traced to the player character. You can't just trash a city and expect to get away without consequences.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

NINES

This ritual opens up an opportunity for prosperity. As soon as the cards are all brought together, all sapient creatures within thirty-six meters of the cards share a vision. They see the Nine of Cups flash out wider. The left hand of the troll is angled and pointing a large revolver at the girl and the elf. There is a flash, and both lie dead. They see the Nine of Blades, which then starts to run time in reverse showing the woman rise, flash back to a dark red-lit room where she hunches over a cyberdeck with an ARO above her that reads "Activate Mjölnir." Then it flashes further back to a furious fight between her and a sharp-featured Asian male (who is seen on the Six of Blades), who is drowning their young

daughter. Next is a flash of the Nine of Coins, followed by the Two of Cups, though the man depicted as fleeing the scene lies dead on the stairs in this vision. Last is a flash of the Nine of Batons that progresses forward in jarring scenes of the ork stumbling from the bar, bleeding, and eventually collapsing in a heap on the street, his canine companion nudging him sadly. The final image in each series leaves a deep feeling of loss in the viewers as if there is something they could and should do to prevent these things. The thought of prevention in turn gives each viewer a feeling of fulfillment and a sense of something good to come.

Each flash is a mini adventure. The troll is an assassin. He is going to kill the girl and/or the elf. Whenever the runners arrive one of the pair will die, whether from a "big revolver" (a metaphor for any large weapon), an explosive in the chair, poison in the wine, or whatever it takes to kill one as the runners focus on saving the other. Saving the elf means gaining a favor from Aster Telestrian, a distant but connected member of the Telestrian family. Saving the girl means gaining a favor from Cara Villiers. The girl is Alise Deporé, a close friend of Villiers who had fallen in love with Aster, though his charms eventually faded and revealed his abusive side. She couldn't escape out of fear and wouldn't ask for help out of shame.

The woman is Hagushi Ani, wife of Renraku executive Hagushi Toka, and the little girl is Hagushi Eera, their daughter. Hagushi Ani was once known as Kori, a megacorporate decker with top-tier skills. Marriage and a family made her leave the shadows. Toka wants Ani to perform a hack against rival MCT outside of Japan, a current no-no among the Japanese megacorporations, and she feels such a job is beyond her skills. When she refuses, Toka will be driven over the edge. He blames her weakness on being a mother and kills their daughter. The death of Eera pushes Ani to madness, and she hacks access to a Mjölnir satellite (Thor shots), launching them at the Renraku facility where she and her husband live.

The runners need to contact her immediately and offer to help her hack into MCT. They need to be convincing, as she'll think they are crackpots if they claim a Tarot card led them to her. Despite her skepticism, she understands that divination magic exists, and proper explanation of the magic involved may sway her. After they help her, they gain a favor from a skilled decker with insider access to Renraku.

The man on the Nine of Coins is Carter Hayes, an Ares executive on vacation in Hong Kong when he is kidnapped for ransom. He is not the sit-still type and will try to escape—and he will die in the process. If the runners can rescue him from his kidnappers, they can gain a favor from an Ares executive who happens to sideline as a high-rolling Mr. Johnson.

The last figure is Dogday. He is a Wolf shaman in Scotland, part of the United Kingdom. The image shows him leaving the Meat House, a pub in Dundee, part of the Scotsprawl, on the River Tay. He stumbles for a kilometer or so down to Magdalen Green, where he collapses and dies from blood loss. He was in a bar brawl where he was fatally stabbed, but he's a tough bastard who takes a while to die. If the runners attempt to save him, they can arrive in time for the bar brawl and join in, possibly saving him from being stabbed in the first place, thereby earning a contact in the UK. Alternately, they can arrive after he is stabbed, while he is wandering, bleeding. They'll need to track him down and save him in order to earn a friend in the UK. The timing is up to the gamemaster.

TENS

This ritual has no maximum number of participants, but the boon is limited. Successful completion of the ritual opens up a pool of 10 Edge points available to any of the participants. Anyone who fails feels they have access to the points, but every use of Edge automatically glitches. A glitch during the ritual means the use of Edge by anyone involved turns out as if they have the Bad Luck quality. A critical glitch during the ritual gives them the Bad Luck quality permanently. The Edge points last until they are spent, but they do not represent a permanent increase in Edge rating, so once used, they cannot be refreshed.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

PAGES

This ritual has no maximum number of participants. It summons a (Force 6 + ritual Force) greater guardian spirit with a number of services owed to each member of the ritual group equal to their number of net hits on the Ritual Test. If given conflicting or simultaneous requests, the spirit will try to figure out a way to do both at once but will choose to do the easier of the two first. Failure on the test means no services are received, while a glitch means the spirit will attempt to hinder the participant while performing the assigned actions. A critical glitch means the spirit will actively try to harm the participants.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

KNIGHTS

This ritual has no maximum number of participants and summons a (Force 6 + ritual Force) greater task spirit with a number of services owed to each member of the ritual group equal to their number of net hits on the Ritual Test. As above, if given conflicting or simultaneous requests, the spirit will try to figure out a way to do both at once or will choose to do the easier of the two first. This spirit is more like a djinn of classical Indian mythology, not some summoned minion there to do your menial tasks. The same rules of failures apply as for the Page.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

QUEENS

This ritual is limited to four individuals and must be cast at Force 5. Successful completion of the ritual grants each participant one of the following boons. Clairvoyance and Clairaudience with a maximum range of 100 kilometers (1 month); access to a Blohm & Voss Classic III with an AI and drone crew (1 month); sacred fire blade of protection (1 month); The Cup of Air'n'eir (1 month). Boons may be selected by the participant, but each participant must receive a different boon. No character can receive an additional boon while still benefitting from an ongoing boon.

The sacred fire blade of protection is a sword, but it is much more. This scimitar is a Force 6 weapon focus that becomes automatically bonded without the expenditure of Karma. The blade also is accompanied by a Force 8 spirit of fire that will wield the blade in the protection of the bearer. The spirit can be called upon to help, or it will simply manifest in times of danger and take up the blade.

The Cup of Air'n'eir is a golden chalice. When the bearer drinks from the cup, they have a small selection of spells they can have cast on them. They can only have one in effect at a time, and they can only drink from the cup once per day. Sustained spells last until the next sunrise or sunset, or until the subject says out loud that they want the spell to end. The spells include Levitate (Force 10; 10 hits), Heal (Force 6; 6 hits), Oxygenate (Force 6; 6 hits), Armor (Force 8; 8 hits; appears as wings that move to deflect attacks); Increase Intuition (Force 4; 4 hits).

The boons come with a cost when the month ends. The participant that chose clairvoyance and clairaudience loses either their hearing or their sight for a month, as the woman from the card appears and gives them a choice of which they will lose. The AI and drones on the Blohm & Voss become violent toward the participant and anyone else on board their boat. The spirit within the sacred fire blade manifests and attacks the previous bearer. The cup makes the participant a walking mana ebb for one month, and they grow wings. The ebb is rated at -6 and extends one hundred meters in all directions from the individual. They are purely decorative and can't be used for flight but they get in the way of wearing any normal clothing or armor over their back.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform.

KING

This ritual requires a minimum of four individuals, but only one gets the benefits. It must be cast at Force 6. Successful completion of the ritual grants one participant the Rights of the King. Once the ritual is successful, all the participants flash to a massive plane of void, where they all stand inside a golden ring. Each participant then vies for control of the power by striking at their foes with their most powerful ability. Everyone rolls 1D6 to determine Initiative—this is purely random, with no other way to increase the roll. Ties mean that those players act simultaneously, determining in secret who they will attack and how they will do it. The battle consists of a skill test of the attacker's choice (often using the character's largest dice pool). The character being attacked rolls the exact same skill and attribute combination. Record net hits for the attacker. There is no Physical or Stun damage inflicted, so players going later in the initiative series do not experience penalties to their dice rolls. The character who obtained the most net hits during their attack wins and is declared King. The King remains in their position for a year and a day.

The Rights of the King are as follows:

1. All ritual participants serve the King for a year and a day. Others do as asked or ordered as long as it does not put their life in immediate danger.

2. The King drinks for free. No matter where they go, drinks are offered or bought for the king by others. This does not prevent others from slipping drugs into the drinks they buy the king.

3. The Hound is ever-vigilant. A powerfully built canine finds the King, then follows and protects the King to the point of self-sacrifice. Use stats for a wolf, p. 403, *SR5*.

4. The King commands the Salamanders. The Salamanders are a pair of Force 8 fire spirits that fight for the king. If disrupted, they reappear at the next sunrise or sunset.

5. The King controls the Midas throne. The Midas throne is an artifact on tour across the numismatic museums of the world. Legends say it can turn any coin, or disc-shaped object, to gold. The truth is that the King can use it to transmute coins into gold while seated on the throne—he just needs to get access to it. The King can transform a kilogram of coins into a kilogram of gold (yes, density is different, so the volume of coins will shrink) each week, providing a small fortune by the end of the year.

6. The King cannot kill. The King cannot commit violence against any individual for their year and a day. Any injuries inflicted by the King on another individual also affect the King in exact proportion to the damage inflicted. Damage inflicted by the Hound and Salamanders, of course, are under no such restrictions.

The ritual takes (Force) hours to perform. The combat at the end to decide who will become the King is not considered to be part of the ritual proper; it occurs after the ritual is complete.

ACES

This ritual requires four individuals and must be cast at Force 6. Successful completion of the ritual grants each participant one of the following powerful boons. The Wand of Life (1 year); The Wand of Death (1 year); single-use code for Excalibur; and Lofwyr's ten-ton gold coin.

The Wand of Life can move life force from one living thing to another. In game terms, it can heal a single box of damage on a sapient creature in exchange for a single

box of damage on another sapient creature, two boxes of damage on a non-sapient creature, or the death of four square meters of plant life. It can also work in reverse, providing life in the same proportion to sapient, non-sapients, or plants in exchange for damage inflicted on an individual. Each box transferred takes a full Combat Round to complete, though it only requires a Simple Action to initiate. Only one box of damage or healing on a sapient creature can be done at a time, and the wand can only be used ten times in a week.

The Wand of Death doesn't move life around; it just takes it. Aiming it is similar to throwing a grenade; spend a Complex Action to make a Throwing Weapons + Agility [Physical] Test. Each hit is a point of damage inflicted by the wand; damage is resisted as if it were damage from a mana-based direct combat spell, meaning the target rolls Willpower to resist the damage. Glitching on the aim test should present the chance of hitting an unintended target; critical glitches should have the wand misfire and possibly damage the wielder. The damage should appear as bleeding from the target's ears, eyes, nose, and mouth.

Excalibur is a space-based weapons platform that fires a five-meter-diameter laser beam that burns through anything. The effects are as follows: 1. Instantly kill/destroy anything in the five-meter beam. 2. 15P Fire damage for an additional two-meter radius. 3. 15S damage out for another twenty meters due to the heat blast wave.

With a successful Engineering + Logic [Mental] (3) Test, the beam can be used to take down a small building. Increase the threshold to 5 for a larger building. Fallout damage from building destruction is up to the gamemaster. Note that this scale of destruction tends to get attention, so the runners might have to deal with the consequences of their actions.

Lofwyr's ten-ton gold coin is worth approximately 600 million nuyen. That's a lot. Problem is, it weighs, well, ten tons. And it's big—around eight centimeters thick and almost two meters in diameter. It does not move easily. Moving all of it is pretty much impossible; moving some of it can be done. Pieces can be shaved off and sold at pawn shops or gold exchanges, or used to pay people who deal in gold. There's a catch, though—Eventually Lofwyr will come looking for his coin. The dragon can be a handy device to let players know that their time playing with the mammoth coin is over.

This ritual brings great rewards, so it takes extra time (Force x 4) hours.

MAJOR ARCANA

The Major Arcana, unlike the sets above, do not need to be gathered in groups to work. They tend to require some action by the individual holding the card, which grants a boon that usually is tied to some aspect of the card. Gamemasters are free to develop other boons using different visual information on the cards.

Unless otherwise noted, none of the actions are repeatable to gain the boon a second time, and boons cannot be received by other individuals or groups when they are already active.

Many of the actions required to activate the cards are not intuitive—characters will generally not just stumble into the action as part of their normal activities. Chasing down rumors and theories about how cards work could be part of the work tied to the cards.

THE BASTARD

Action: Use the card to cut the right ear. A small paper cut is all it takes. The blood provider is the person who gets the commlink number.

Boon: Success produces a commlink number that can be used to contact the famous Harlequin. The real one. As a mystic being, he knows why they've been given his number. He may offer a job, answer a question, or just hang up on them a few times to amuse himself. Check out "Everybody Plays the Fool" in the *Drawing Destiny* anthology or "The Thing We Do for Love" in *The Clutch of Dragons* for some insights into Harlequin's way of talking and mode of operation.

THE MATRIX

Action: An electric current is run through the card, and the card is touched by someone, and the power is transferred in a blue wave of arcing electricity.

Boon: The person who touches the card suddenly becomes able to access the Matrix like a technomancer. Stats are generated as they would be for a technomancer, with a Resonance Rating matching the character's Intuition. The normal restrictions on not having Magic and Resonance at the same time do not apply in this instance. The character also receives four complex forms that match the personality of the user, chosen by the gamemaster. The character should roll an Edge + Willpower Test. The ability lasts for a number of days equal to the number of hits on this test.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Action: The subject must get a tattoo of a black panther, green tropical bird, green viper, and the image of the transforming face from the card.

Boon: Once complete, the user gains the Shapechange spell as an innate spell. They can either use their own magic abilities to cast it, or a dice pool of 12 that casts the spell at Force 5. They can choose to change into the panther, the bird, or the viper each time they cast the spell. Non-magical characters do not gain a functional Magic rating for any other purpose, but the ability will show up in their aura, for those who can read it properly. The ability is permanent as long as the tattoos stay intact.

AES SÍDHE BANRÌGH

Action: The subject burns a bundle of wheat. The smoke gathers and thickens to the point of opacity. The subject must walk into and through the smoke. Any hesitation in the initial steps ruins the action, which then must be started from the beginning.

Boon: Walking into smoke with at least five confident steps begins the passage to the Seelie Court. Hesitation beyond that point results in a trip to a location outside of Bristeluchairt, the castle of the court. Walking straight through leads them to the Spire (p. 101, *Court of Shadows*).

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Action: The subject places the card on top of a brand new commlink and presses the image of a purple button. The card immediately melds into the 'link, and the logos of the Big Ten megacorporations appear on the display.

Boon: When one of the logos is pressed, the phone dials the CEO (or equivalent) of that megacorporation. The CEO is not obligated to answer and owes nothing to the caller. The calls should fall at fortuitous times where the CEO happens to need something that the caller or their colleagues can provide. Each CEO can only be contacted once—they quickly change their commcode, even if the runners prove to be useful.

THE HIGHER POWER

Action: The subject places the card on their commlink and taps the series of figures in the green bar.

Boon: As the last symbol is touched, a message arrives on the commlink. The message includes a code for a single one-way ticket to Zurich Orbital. The ticket comes with a special ARO code that allows the subject to pass most standard security. Weapon scans will still be run on the subject, but they won't be denied just because they have a criminal SIN, or even no SIN at all. The ticket is not transferable, but runners can always try to fool the system and let someone else use it.

THE AVATARS

Action: This action requires three subjects. The trio stack their hands on the card in such a way that each person's hand touches both of the others. As the last hand is placed, the card flashes, and colored lights swirl around their hands. Each person receives three marks on their left hand that correspond to the three Avatars. A red dragon, blue hawk, and green DNA double-helix appear in different orders on their thumb, index, and middle finger.

Boon: By touching thumb to one of the other fingers the subject can see through the eyes of the one of the other people involved in the action. The thumb color is the color of the individual represented by that color, while the fingers represent their two counterparts. The ability works over any distance and isn't obstructed by wards or other magics. The ability lasts for a month.

THE RIDE

Action: The subject places the card on their commlink and presses the image of a white button.

Boon: An icon of a short Roman sword appears on the commlink. Pressing the icon calls an AI-controlled Saab Gladius 998 TI (p. 49, *Rigger 5.0*) to the location. The vehicle will transport the subject and engage in defensive driving maneuvers, but it will not actively enter into a combat situation. The AI and the car prefer escape over engagement, and as the fastest thing on the streets, escape is usually easy. The car will then be available on demand to the user for a period of time. The character should make an Edge + Edge Test; the car then is available for a number of weeks equal to the hits.

DISCIPLINE

Action: The subject must be preparing to perform a long and arduous task. They need to gather the materials necessary for the task and set them out around their work space. They then use the card to cut the back of their hand and put three drops of blood in the work area.

Boon: The action summons a Force 6 task spirit that will help the individual complete a long-term task that requires intense discipline. This spirit will stay with the character until the task is complete, and it will allow them to do nothing else besides the task, eat, and sleep.

THE HERMIT

Action: The subject performs this action in an enclosed space no larger than twenty-five square meters and can have up to one hundred other people present, though space gets real tight after fifty or so. The action requires the burning of black powder or some other bullet propellant on top of the card. As the powder burns in a flash, it creates a massive cloud of blue smoke that fills the space, obscuring all senses to the point where everyone present feels as if they are in a void. The smoke dissipates quickly after a minute, and everyone in the space finds themselves transported.

Boon: The ritual opens a gateway that shifts everyone to a metaplanar cabin. The cabin is not at all modern and appears to have been created during a time comparable to the Middle Ages. The cabin is lit with blue crystals that dim and brighten with a touch. Outside the cabin is a wild metaplane. There are no indigenous sapient life forms present, but there are plenty of predatory creatures, both large and small. Others who may have been trapped on this metaplane may be present, but they'd have endured a lot and might be a little feral.

Returning to the material plane can be done in three ways. First, the subject can fall asleep in the main bed of the cabin. When they wake, they are back in the room

where they started, along with everyone else who was still inside the cabin. Everyone who was awake simply falls unconscious and wakes in the room. Second, the subject can be knocked unconscious anywhere in the cabin. The same rules apply to the others for returning with the subject. Third, the subject can be killed anywhere on the metaplane. Anyone in the cabin shifts back, while everyone else is trapped on the wild metaplane—until the next group of travelers arrive.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Action: The card is folded in half and then into thirds, creating six sections. The card is then torn along the lines of the fold. Each section is then ingested.

The card, at this point, will be lost to the individual, but never underestimate the Tarot's ability to generate replacements.

Boon: The subject gains a special pool of 6 Edge points, besides their normal Edge. Each point can only be used once, and they never refresh. Each time the character uses Edge, they must choose to use points from their normal pool or from this special pool.

THE VIGILANTE

Action: The subject grasps the card in both hands and then slides the edges along their palms. The card cuts them, but the blood soaks into the card, dissolves it, and then flows back into the open wounds, which then seal back shut.

Boon: Within a short time after the ritual, the subject will run across an enemy in a way that gives the subject the advantage. If they don't have an active enemy, then they simply gain some fortuitous positioning or event timing in the near future. Basically, they receive one instance of excellent fortune over adversity.

THE HANGED MAN

Action: The subject must hold the card between their feet and perform a handstand. As they do, the card shifts into rope and then lifts them up and dangles them from the ceiling for a brief moment. They are then lowered to the floor, and the rope disappears.

Boon: The subject gains a single use of Edge where they are able to change a glitch or critical glitch, but instead of only moving it one step better, it turns it into a success with 5 net hits instead. They use a normal Edge point to do this; this is simply a one-use-only action.

... 404 ...

Action: The subject places the card on a commlink. They then place a white rose on the commlink as well. As soon as the rose touches the card, the card dissolves into the commlink, and a white rose icon appears on the display.

Boon: Pressing the white rose icon allows the subject to instantly brick any device that they can detect with the link or see with their eyes. The subject should roll Edge + Logic; the number of hits equals the number of uses of this boon.

THRESHOLD

Action: The card is held up in the center of a doorway. The card floats there once released, and then the doorway flashes into a black void.

Boon: Through the portal is the Dweller on the Threshold. The Dweller offers three trips to known or random metaplanes to the subject. Between each trip, the card reappears and hovers in the doorway until all the trips are taken, at which point it simply fails to return when the subject does. Note that the doorway can be used by anyone—it receives the boon, not a particular individual. So if someone happens into the doorway and stumbles through, they may take a trip a character was trying to save for a particular use.

THE DRAGON

Action: The subject must draw or project the Saeder-Krupp logo onto a reflective surface. The card is then placed in the center of the logo. The logo fades into the surface, even if it is projected, and the mirrored surface becomes shiny and silver (but non-reflective) for a few moments. Then the face of Lofwyr appears.

Boon: The subject gains a favor from Lofwyr. The dragon, by this point, knows the Tarot has this function for him, and while he doesn't do favors happily, he does them. If the favor is interesting, the subject should be fine. If the favor is trivial or insulting, Lofwyr will look for ways to perform the favor in a way that truly screws the requestor. Or he might just hunt them down and eat them. Depends on his mood.

THE TOWER

Action: The card is burned. As the card burns, the subject receives a series of messages on their commlink. The first informs them they have a private room reservation available at the Space Needle. The second provides a link to the data node for KTIR news in Portland. The third flashes the words, "Be on the Lookout." An image of Richard Villiers then appears.

Boon: The private room reservation is available whenever they want it. It is a place where the elite of the elite go to rub elbows and talk about how they run the world. The access to the KTIR data node provides behind-the-scenes looks and when and where the elite assemble, and what they talk about. The exact details of what's on there are up to the gamemaster. The warning about Villiers is because the subject will have a chance encounter with Villiers in the near future. Again, it's the

gamemaster's discretion as to what happens when that meeting occurs.

THE COMET

Action: The subject throws the card into the air and says "Jaya Shiva shankara." As the card flies up, it bursts into a pair of flaming comets that swing back around on the subject and hit them in the side.

Boon: The subject gains the SURGE Quality Shiva Arms (p. 118, *Run Faster*). These are permanent unless removed with surgery.

THE SHADOWS

Action: The card is carried into a shadowy corner and then clasped between both palms. When the palms are opened the card has turned into a large, worn ticket that says, "The Dark Side, Admit One." The subject's commlink then gains a new icon on the display that reads, "Go to the Dark Side."

Boon: The subject gains one-time access to a private club called the Dark Side, which specializes in fulfilling unique needs. The commlink icon, once activated, is a guide to the club. Its first piece of information is simply the name of a city: London. Once the ticket holder arrives in the city, a midnight-black BMW Luxus (p. 73, *Rigger 5.0*) rolls up to the subject, stops, and opens the door. An unseen voice says, "To the Dark Side." The ticket needs to be presented at the door of the club to gain entry, and the ticket holder can bring in up to five guests besides themselves. Once in the club, the runners can have their desires met, or they can have fun gathering material on what others are up to (possibly for use in future blackmail), or they can meet some powerful movers and shakers who send them on a new mission, or whatever else the gamemaster sees fit.

THE ECLIPSE

Action: The card is passed in front of a flashlight or narrow light source. As the card passes across the light, a trideo-like scene plays out around the subject.

Boon: The subject receives a glimpse of the future. This can be a future event related directly to them or something unrelated they can get involved in now that they've seen events unfold. Depending on the nature of the event, characters may become desperate to prevent it—or make sure nothing interferes with making it happen.

KARMA

Action: The subject uses a laser sight or laser projector to add to the many dots in the scene. As the light strikes the card, the kneeling figure unfolds from the image and rises before the subject.

Boon: The card summons a Force 6 guardian spirit willing to sacrifice itself to save the subject. Until an opportunity arises, the spirit will stay nearby to the subject in astral space. The spirit cannot be commanded and only acts when its sacrifice is needed.

THE AWAKENED WORLD

Action: The subject must perform the action in a mirror while looking at the card in the mirror at the card's reflection not the card itself. The subject traces their finger in circles around the ouroboros (the frame) in the image on the card. As they do, the mirror in front of them begins to waver and expand to the size of a doorframe until it looks more like an upright pool of mercury than a mirror.

Boon: The subject can use the mirror as a passage to the astral plane by stepping through it. The passage allows astral projection when stepped through. The traveler's body falls limp to the ground next to the passageway. Once opened, the doorway stays open for a year and a day. It remains in place and cannot be moved. Even if someone tries to remove the mirror, the frame may come off, but the passageway stays in place.

MIX AND MATCH

Many cards have matching stone symbols, items that appear in many places, themes that connect multiple cards, or even stories that play out across the cards. Gathering these together can offer boons, adventures, items, or just misery. Once all the cards that are needed are gathered together, an action must be performed. Sometimes the action is simple, other times it's complex and may involve an entire adventure. Completing the cards' ritual offers a short-lived boon. This could be a skill boost for one moon, access to a spell from sundown to sunup, access to an adept power, astral sight, any other small ability with a time limit, or an item that can be very useful but might have some terrible side-effects. Weak gifts may last for a full moon cycle or even a year and a day, while great boons might only be a single use or limited to a day or night cycle. Gamemasters can make such benefits as they see fit—only one example is provided here for the mix-and-match option. But it's a doozy.

CRYSTAL BLOODBLADE

(THE RIDE, FIVE OF BLADES, TEN OF BLADES, PAGE OF BLADES, KNIGHT OF BLADES, KING OF BLADES)

Action: Once all the cards that contain the katana with the red crystal pommel are collected in the same place, the subject lays them out in the shape of a sword. The subject then places a drop of their blood on each card, and the blood then hisses and sizzles as if hot. When

the last card gets a drop of blood, the cards begin smoking until visibility drops to zero. When the smoke clears, the Crystal Bloodblade is left in its place.

Boon: The Crystal Bloodblade is a powerful artifact. It was created in a time of great bloodshed and war when its bloodlust could be sated and its bearer rarely lived long enough to suffer the curse upon it.

The bite of the Bloodblade transfers life from the victim to the bearer, but there is a price to pay. When a sapient being is hit with the blade, the blade-bearer heals half as many boxes of damage (rounded down) as the weapon inflicts. Any injuries healed this way need to be tracked separately due to the blade's curse. The wounds (boxes) that are healed return over time. Each sunrise the bearer of the blade makes a Damage Resistance roll using only Body against the number of boxes of damage healed to date, with a maximum of their Physical Damage Track (this is to prevent the blade from actually killing its wielder through the intensity of returning wounds). These wounds can be healed by giving the blade new victims, as well as through normal or magical means—but those means do not stop the wounds from potentially returning again the next morning.

Wielders of the sword tend to build such a high backlog of wounds that they start each day weak and stumbling until they can feed the blade. As might be imagined, this can wear on a wielder. If they pass the sword on to another, the first time the new wielder uses it, all the wounds once again return to the former wielder, again resisted with Body only. Once the former wielder recovers from these wounds, though, they are completely healed, and the wounds will not return. Should they become the wielder of the blade again (something the sword will not allow for at least a year), they will start building up wounds from scratch, as if they had never used the sword before.

LARGE COLLECTIONS

We'll wrap up the discussion of powers with a pair of large collections that offer interesting opportunities for extended campaigns. The first collection consists of all the Major Arcana, all four of each suit's Court Cards, and the Ace for each suit. This set, when laid out, creates a small map of the world generated by concentric circles. The center of the circles is a point in Africa. If the cards are kept together and travel toward this point, the map gets more focused. It eventually reveals a point in Asamando, the Ghoul Kingdom. At that location is a temple and inside the temple is ... nasty spirits or new critters or whatever the gamemaster comes up with. Just make sure there's some kind of reward for the players.

The second collection consists of the numbered cards of the minor arcana, not including the Ace. This reveals another world map, this one created by linear dots. One way to use this map is that once the cards are gathered and the map is activated, the map becomes a guide to Sixth World Tarot activity. Any time a card is activated or located, the dot glows a bright blue. The exact location is never revealed, but the map can be expanded to give the general vicinity (that is, the city or similar-sized location) where the hunt for the card should begin.

MESSAGE
Uploading the second half
of payment now. -Johnson
WORLD
RECORD
HOLDER

CONGRATULATIONS
ON YOUR
PROMOTION!

CHARACTER TROVE

ANNE LYNNE

(DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF METAPLANAR ASSETS, DRACO FOUNDATION; FEMALE HUMAN

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
4	5	4	3	6	6	5	6	5	6.0	14

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 7
Initiative: 9 + 1D6
Limits: Physical 5, Mental 10, Social 10
Skills: Assensing 9, Athletics skill group 4, Blades 4, Computer 4, Con 6, Conjuring skill group 10, Counterspelling 8, Etiquette 7, First Aid 4, Intimidation 5, Leadership 10, Negotiation 6, Palming 5, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 5 (Hold-outs +2), Sneaking 5, Spellcasting 11, Survival 6
Qualities: Analytical Mind, Focused Concentration 5, Indomitable (Mental 2, Social 1)
Initiate Grade: 8
Metamagics: Absorption, Centering, Channeling, Extended Masking, Flexible Signature, Masking, Quickening, Shielding
Spells: Agony, Analyze Magic, Analyze Truth, Antidote, Armor, Ball Lightning, Clairvoyance, Heal, Improved Invisibility, Increase Reflexes, Increase Willpower, Levitate, Magic Fingers, Mob Control, Powerbolt, Stealth, Stunball
Gear: Contacts (Capacity 3, w/ low-light vision, vision enhancement 1, vision magnification), ear buds (Capacity 3, w/ audio enhancement 2, select sound filter), jammer (area, Rating 6), NightShade fashion armor [7], Transys Avalon commlink (Device Rating 6)
Weapons:
Combat knife [Blade, Acc 6, Reach —, DV 5P, AP –3]
Fichetti-Tiffani Self-Defender 2075 [Hold-out, Acc 4, DV 6P, AP —, SS, RC —, 4(c)]

THE ARCANE THREE

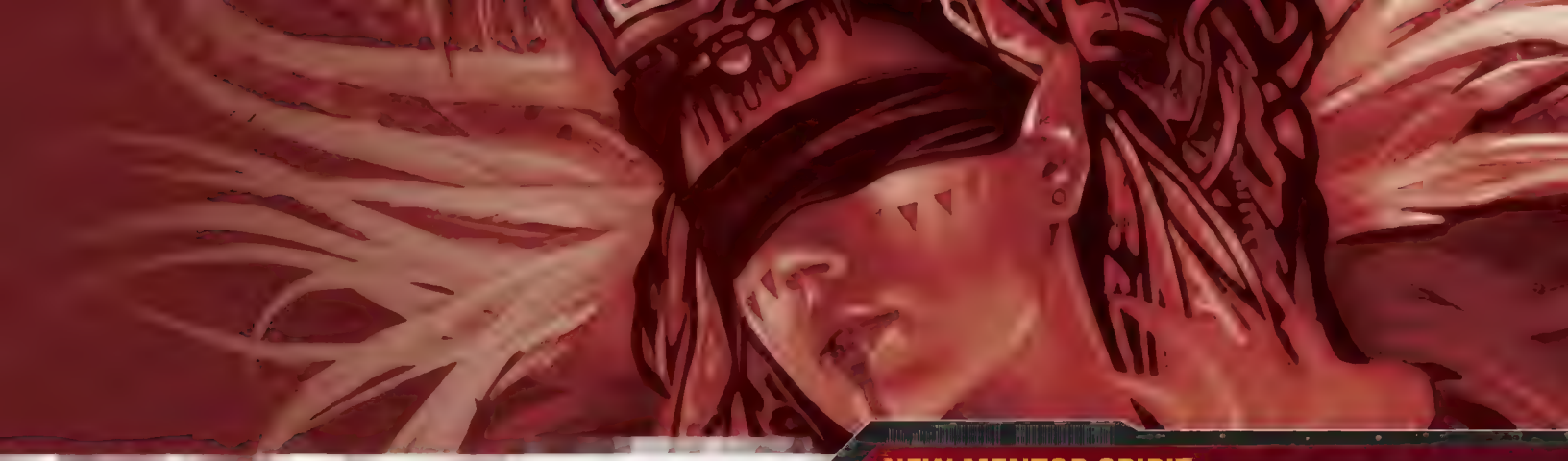
BLACK STAR, ASSOCIATION OF AWAKENED ANARCHISTS

KANGEE CIKALA

(DWARF STREET SHAMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
6	3	4	5	6	4	5	6	8	6.0	12

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/11
Armor: 10
Limits: Physical 7, Mental 7, Social 8
Initiative: 9(10) + 2D6
Astral Initiative: 10 + 3D6
Skills: Alchemy 6, Arcana 7, Assensing 7, Astral Combat 8, Athletics skill group 6, Banishing 6, Binding 9, Blades 5, Counterspelling 5, First Aid 4, Longarms 6, Outdoors skill group 8, Perception 9, Ritual Spellcasting 7, Sneaking 8, Summoning 8(10), Unarmed Combat 6
Qualities: Code of Honor: Harmony With Nature: The Shaman's Code, Mentor Spirit: Raven (Alt), Solid Rep: Shadowrunners, Lightning Reflexes
Rituals: Ally Conjuration, Augury and Sortilege, Calling: Ally Spirits, Calling: Normal Spirits, Circle of Healing, Far Sensing, Group Bond, Kything, Remote Sensing, Summon Great Form Spirit, Watcher
Initiate Grade: 7
Metamagic: Absorption, Masking, Psychometry, Reflection, Sensing, Shielding, Sympathetic Linking
Gear: Common Denominator Element, forearm guards, gas mask, lined coat w/ chemical protection (3), fire resistance (3), nonconductivity (3), ritual spellcasting focus (Detection spells, Force 4), summoning focus (spirits of air, Force 4), fake SIN (Rating 6)
Weapons:
Defiance T-250 (short-barrel version) [Shotgun, Acc 4, DV 9P, AP –1, SS/SA, 5 (m)]
Staff [Club, Reach 2, Acc 6, DV 8P, AP —]



CARÓG BHEAG

(HUMAN STREET MAGE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
4	4	5	3	6	6	6	6	6	6.0	12

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 10/16 (Caróg sustains an Armor spell with his sustaining focus at all times)
Limits: Physical 5, Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative: 11 + 1D6
Astral Initiative: 12 + 3D6
Skills: Acting skill group 6, Alchemy 4, Arcana 9, Assensing 6, Astral Combat 5, Athletics skill group 5, Automatics 5, Banishing 6, Blades 6, Counterspelling 6, Influence skill group 7, Instruction 5, Perception 10, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Ritual Spellcasting 6, Sneaking 8, Spellcasting 8, Summoning 5, Unarmed Combat 5
Qualities: Mentor Spirit: Raven (Alt), Solid Rep: Shadowrunners, Lucky
Spells: Analyze Truth, Armor, Chaotic World, Clairvoyance, Combat Sense, Flamethrower, Glue Strip, Heal, Hot Potato, Ice Sheet, Ice Spear, Mind Probe, Net, Opium Den, Powerball, Stunball, Translate, Trid Phantasm
Rituals: Ally Conjuration, Atonement, Group Bond, Masking Ward, Remote Sensing, Smudging, Summon Great Form Spirit
Initiate Grade: 7
Metamagics: Absorption, Cleansing, Extended Masking, Masking, Quickening, Sensing, Shielding
Gear: Common Denominator Element, forearm guards, gas mask, lined coat w/ chemical protection (3), fire resistance (3), nonconductivity (3), spellcasting focus (Detection spells, Force 5), sustaining focus (Manipulation spells, Force 5), fake SIN (Rating 6)
Weapons:
Ingram Smartgun X [SMG, Acc 4, DV 8P, AP —, BF/FA, RC 2(3), 32 (c), w/ folding stock, gas-vent system (2), silencer/suppressor, smartgun system, internal]

** In addition to sustaining an Armor spell, Caróg has a quickened Combat Sense spell running on him at all times (6 hits). If he feels like a fight will be risky, he takes no chances. He uses one point of Edge at the beginning of combat to seize the initiative, and attempt a large (Force 12) area spell, such as Chaotic World, Glue Strip, Hot Potato, Ice Sheet, Opium Den, Powerball, or Stunball to end combat quickly or distract enemies as he runs.*

NEW MENTOR SPIRIT

RAVEN (ALT)*

Stories of ravens are deeply interwoven in the mythology and lore in nearly every major culture from the Fifth World. Ravens have been powerful forces for either good or ill, but always making their presence known. While local cultures may vary as to which attribute is Raven's most important, the common thread in all tales is that Raven seeks to gather and perhaps offer something in return. Whether it is offering wisdom in Celtic and Norse traditions, offering light from darkness in tales from the Pacific Northwest, or Irish and Druidic myths speaking of Raven giving mystic or scientific secrets, Raven is associated with giving and taking. Followers of Raven collect facts, data, arcana, and anything else they can grab that may come in handy later.

ADVANTAGES

All: +2 dice pool modifier for knowledge skill tests.

Magician: +2 dice to Detection spells, preparations, and rituals or +2 dice to summoning spirits if summoner also has Code of Honor: Harmony with Nature, The Shaman's Code and bargains with the summoned spirit. (choose one)

Adept: 2 free levels of Enhanced Perception.

DISADVANTAGES

Followers of Raven share their mentor's love of collecting. When presented with data, knowledge, or other gear that would be valuable (gamemaster's discretion), you must pass a Charisma + Willpower Test (3), or be unable to resist trying to acquiring it.

Similar Archetypes: Crow, Collector

**See upcoming Forbidden Arcana for explanation of Alternate Mentor Spirits*

KOGARASU MARU

(ELF ADEPT)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
5 (8)	4 (8)	6 (9)	4	6	5	6	5	6	6.0	12

Condition Monitor (P/S): 12/11
Armor: 13
Limits: Physical 7(9), Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative: 9(15) + 4D6
Astral Initiative: 12(15) + 4D6
Skills: Arcana 7, Archery 5, Athletics skill group 8, Blades 10, Con 5, Disguise 4, Escape Artist 4, First Aid 4, Forgery 4, Free Fall 5, Impersonation 5, Intimidation 5, Outdoors skill group 8, Palming 6, Perception 9, Sneaking 10, Unarmed Combat 10, Ritual Spellcasting 1
Qualities: Mentor Spirit: Raven (Alt), Solid Rep: Shadowrunners
Martial Arts Techniques: Flying Kick, Kick Attack, Iaijutsu
Rituals: Group Bond
Adept Powers: Adrenaline Boost 1, Improved Physical Attribute (Body) 3, Improved Physical Attribute (Agility) 4, Improved Reflexes 3, Mystic Armor 4, Penetrating Strike 1
Initiate Level: 7
Metamagic: Adept Centering, Domain of the Warrior, Masking, Power Point, Presence: Intimidation, Stillness of the Void, Supernatural Prowess (8/day): Strength, Enhanced Perception 2
Gear: Common Denominator Element, forearm guards, gas mask, lined coat [w/ chemical protection (3), fire resistance (3), nonconductivity (3)], fake SIN (Rating 6)
Weapons:
Katana weapon focus (4) [Blade, Reach 1, Acc 7, DV 7P, AP –3, w/ weapon focus (4)*]
Unarmed strike [Unarmed Combat, Acc 9, DV 4S, AP —]

**Kogarasu will not use his sword unless it seems likely he will lose. Otherwise, he will use Penetrating Strike, Kick Attack, and Supernatural prowess as his primary attack.*

ARMANDO SALAZAR

DIRECTOR SPECIAL PROJECTS, AZTECHNOLOGY (HUMAN MALE)

Note: All information here is only an estimation of the subject's known abilities and skills or what has been demonstrated thus far. Information presented here has a high probability of being incomplete and or out of date. **Confront subject at own risk**.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
5	4	4	4	6	5	6	6	5	6.0	13

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/11
Armor: 8
Limits: Physical 6, Mental 10, Social 8
Physical Initiative: 10 + 1D6
Astral Initiative: 10 + 2D6
Skills: Alchemy 5, Arcana 8, Archery 3, Artificing 6, Assensing 7, Astral Combat 8, Banishing 8, Binding 7, Biotehcnology 4, Chemistry 6, Close Combat skill group 4, Computer 5, Counterspelling 8, Firearms skill group 4, First Aid 6, Free Fall 4, Gymnastics 5, Influence skill group 7, Intimidation 6, Medicine 6, Palming 4, Perception 6, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pilot Watercraft 2, Ritual Spellcasting 8, Running 3, Sneaking 4, Spellcasting 9, Summoning 8, Survival 4, Swimming 3, Throwing Weapons 2
Knowledge Skills: Aztlan Politics 6, Biology 6, Counter-Intelligence Operations 6, Corporate Knowledge (Aztechnology) 8, Intelligence Operations 6, Magical Theory 9, Meditation 5, Military History 5, Military Theory and Tactics 5, Occult Theory 6, Occult History 6, Psychology 7
Languages: Aztlaner Spanish N, Aztlander Sign Language 6, English 6, Hopi 2, German 2, Japanese 2, Russian 2
Qualities: Addiction (Mild, coffee/caffeine) 1, Aged 1, Born Rich, College Education, Distinctive Style (crippled left arm), Focused Concentration 3, Indomitable (Mental) 2, Poor Self Control – Vindictive, SINer (Corporate Limited, Aztechnology), Spirit Affinity (Blood Spirits), Vendetta
Initiate Grade: 6
Metamagics: Centering, Efficient Ritual, Flexible Signature, Quickening, Sacrifice, Shielding
Spells: Compel Truth, Disrupt Focus, Eyes of the Pack, Fireball, Firewater, Glue, Glue Strip, Knockout, Levitate, Magebolt, Mana Barrier, Manaball, Manabolt, Offensive Mana Barrier, Physical Barrier, Powerball, Resist Pain
Rituals: Alarm Ward, Blood Bond, Blood Rite, Circle of Protection, Masking Ward, Obfuscating Ward
Bound Spirits: Unknown, estimated at least one blood spirit of unknown force/ability
Gear: AR gloves, Atheme (Rating 4), Armante Suit [8] (w/ concealable holster), certified credstick (ebony), contacts [Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision], earbuds [Rating 3, w/ spatial recognizer], Fairlight Caliban commlink, High Lifestyle (12 months), Medicarro (DocWagon equivalent) contract (super platinum), Power focus (Rating 3), Ritual Spellcasting focus (Rating 3)
Weapons:
Browning Ultra-Power [Heavy Pistol, Acc 6, DV 8P, AP –5, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ APDS ammo, personalized grip, spare clips x1]
Knife [Blade, Acc 5, DV (STR + 1)P, AP —, Reach —]

BENJAMIN E. EDWARDS

(MALE HUMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
4	3	5	4	6	2	4	6	6	6.0	12

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 10
Initiative: 9 + 1D6
Limits: Physical 6, Mental 5, Social 8
Skills: Assensing 9, Athletics skill group 3, Conjuring skill group 9, Firearms skill group 4, Intimidation 1, Perception 3, Sorcery skill group 9, Unarmed Combat 5
Initiate Grade: 7
Metamagics: Centering, Channeling, Extended Masking, Flexible Signature, Masking, Quickening, Shielding
Spells: Agony, Increase Reflexes, Power Bolt, Swarm
Gear: Armored jacket, power focus (Rating 6)
Weapons:
Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5(7), DV 9P, AP –2, SA, RC —, 15(c), 1 extra clip]

CABAL HUNTERS

Not much is known about the Hunters, except that they are efficient, deadly, and merciless. Underneath, they are all just elves, but they have been trained to be silent and cause fear, leaving no witnesses behind.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
6	7 (10)	6 (9)	5 (8)	5	5	6	7	6	6.0	10

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/11
Armor: 20
Limits: Physical 8(12), Mental 9, Social 9
Initiative: 12(15) + 4D6
Skills Athletics skill group 7, Close Combat skill group 9, Demolitions 4, Firearms skill group 10, Perception 8, Stealth skill group 8
Qualities: Adept, High Pain Tolerance 2, Indomitable (Mental) 2, Indomitable (Physical) 1
Adept Powers: Critical Strike: Blades, Improved Ability (Automatics) (3), Improved Physical Attribute (Agility) (3), Improved Physical Attribute (Strength) (3*), Improved Reflexes (3), Mystic Armor (2), Spell Resistance (1)
Initiate Grade: 5
Metamagic: Flexible Signature, Masking, Power Point x 3
Gear: Fairlight Caliban, full body armor w/ chemical seal, full body armor helmet, *qi focus: improved physical attribute (3) (strength) (12), ruthenium polymer cloak (4)
Weapons:
Ranger Arms SM-5 [Sniper Rifle, Acc 8, DV 14P, AP –5, SA, RC (1), 15 (c), w/ imaging scope, shock pad, silencer/suppressor]
Yamaha Raiden [Assault Rifle, Acc 6, DV 11P, AP –2, BF/FA, RC 1, 60 (c), w/ silencer/suppressor, smartgun system (internal)]
Forearm snap-blades weapon focus (6) [Blade, Acc 5, DV 11P, AP –2, w/ ceramic/plasteel components (6), personalized grip, weapon focus (6)]
High explosive grenade [Grenade, non-aerodynamic, Acc 12, DV 16P, –2/m, AP –2]
Thermal smoke grenade [Grenade, non-aerodynamic, Acc 12, DV Th. Smoke, 10m Radius, AP —]

DEVIL

(ORK BOT'KHAM GANGER)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
6	5	4	6	4	2	5	4	5	6.0

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/10
Armor: 6
Limits: Physical 8, Mental 4, Social 6
Initiative: 7 + 1D6
Skills: Blades 4, Clubs 3, Etiquette 1 (Street +2), Intimidation 4, Pistols 4, Unarmed Combat 4
Qualities: Prejudiced (Outspoken, elves), Toughness, Uncouth
Gear: Armor clothing, cram, jazz, kamikaze (2 doses), Meta Link commlink
Weapons:
Remington Roomsweeper [Heavy Pistol, Acc 4, DV 7P, AP –1, SA, 8 (m)]
Katana [Blade, Reach 1, Acc 7, DV 9P, AP –3]

EMILY LLANFRECHFA

MYSTIC SEER/ARTIST (HUMAN FEMALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
2	2	3	2	4	6	6	3	3	6.0	5

Condition Monitor (P/S): 9/10
Armor: 9
Limits: Physical 3, Mental 9, Social 6
Physical Initiative: 9 + 1D6
Skills: Artisan 10, Assensing 3, Computer 4, Etiquette 5, First Aid 2, Perception 5, Performance 3, Pilot Ground Craft 1, Running 2, Sneaking 4, Swimming 1
Knowledge Skills: Anatomy 3, Art Composition 7, Art History 5, Art Styles 6, Chemistry 3, Classic Artists 4, Comic Books 4, Pop Culture 4, Punk Rock 4, Sculpting 7, Technical Artistry 7
Languages: English N, Gaelic 2, Welsh 5
Qualities: Analytical Mind, Born Rich, Inspired (Artisan), Insomnia 1, Perceptive 2, SINner (United Kingdom), Social Stress (Wallflower), The Artist's Way

Adept Powers: Astral Perception, Eidetic Sense Memory, Enhanced Perception 2, Heightened Concern, Improved Ability (Artisan) 1, Improved Potential (Mental Limit), Improved Sense: Tactile, Nimble Fingers, Piercing Senses 2, Sustenance, Three-Dimensional Memory

Gear: AR gloves, armored vest [9] (w/ biomonitor, shock weave, tool kit: artisan), certified credstick (platinum), DocWagon Contract (platinum), earbuds (Rating 1 w/ audio enhancement), electronic paper, glasses (Rating 3 w/ image link, low-light vision, vision enhancement), Luxury lifestyle (permanent), micro-camera, printer, shop (Artisan studio), tool kit (Artisan) x3, Transys Avalon commlink, trodes

FARGUS SOL, PHD/T

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AND HEAD OF ORACLE SOCIETY (ELF MALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
4	4	4	3	6	6	6	6	3	6.0	4

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 9
Limits: Physical 5, Mental 8, Social 12
Physical Initiative: 10 + 1D6
Astral Initiative: 12 + 2D6

Skills: Arcana 8, Artificing 4, Assensing 5, Animal Handling (Canines + 2) 4, Astral Combat 6, Banishing 6, Binding 6, Blades 3, Computer 4, Counterspelling 7, Con 5, Disenchanging 6, Etiquette 6, Gymnastics 4, Instruction 7, Intimidation 4, Leadership 5, Longarms (Shotguns + 2) 2, Negotiation 5, Palming 4, Performance 6, Pistols 5, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Pilot Watercraft 4, Ritual Spellcasting 4, Running 5, Spellcasting 6, Summoning 6, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Knowledge Skills: Academia 6, Advanced Magical Theory 6, Archeology 6, Architecture 4, Business Law 3, Classic Literature, Literary Science 6, Magical Theory 8, Music 7, Mythology 6, Occultism 7, Political Science 4, Pop Culture 4, Tobacco Blends 5

Languages: Arabic 2, Aztlaner Spanish 3, Chinese 3, Czech 7, English 6, Gaelic N, German 4, French 3, Japanese 3, Spanish 4, Sperenthiel 7.

Qualities: Addiction (mild, tobacco), Analytical Mind, Code of Honor: Hermetic Code, College Education, Common Sense, First Impression, Focused Concentration 1, SINner (Czech Republic)

Initiate Grade: 3

Metamagics: Centering, Cleansing, Masking

Gear: Area jammer (Rating 4), AR gloves, armor vest [9] (w/ concealable holster, insulation 3, nonconductivity 2), camera, canine (Lexi, domesticated, female Czech sheppard), datachip (x10), Doc Wagon contract (gold), earbuds, electronic paper, Fuchi Cyber-X7 commlink, glasses [Rating 4 w/ flare compensation, image link, vision enhancement 1, vision mannification: electronic], holo-projector, Long Haul (doses x4), micro-camera, middle lifestyle (10 months), printer, power foci (Rating 4), spare shotgun ammo (x20 flechette), spare light pistol ammo (x50 gel rounds), travel bag, trodes, white noise generator (Rating 4)

Weapons:

Colt America L-36 [Light Pistol, Acc 8, DV 7S, AP + 1, SA, RC —, 11 (c), w/ gel rounds, personalized grip, spare clip]

PJSS Model 55 [Shotgun, Acc 7, DV 13P, AP + 4, SS/BF (– 2), RC —, 2 (barrel), w/ flechette (buckshot) ammo, personalized grip]

HEADHUNTER MEMBER

Note: The information below is based on intelligence regarding currently known capabilities of combat/field members of the group known as The Headhunters. Members are highly proficient combatants and can be of any sex or metatype. They are also known to utilize a wide variety of weapons and equipment depending on their mission. It is also not uncommon to encounter specialists such as magicians, matrix specialist, or other support specialist. This is an amalgamation of what has been encountered thus far.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	varies	varies

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/11
Armor: 18
Limits: Physical 7, Mental 7, Social 8
Physical Initiative: 10(11) + 2D6

Skills: Armorer 2, Close Combat skill group 5, Demolitions 3, Exotic Melee Weapon (Blast Shield) 3, Firearms skill group 6, First Aid 3, Free Fall 3, Gunnery 3, Gymnastics 3, Heavy Weapons 3, Outdoors skill group 3, Perception 5, Pilot Aircraft 2, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pilot Watercraft 2, Thrown Weapons 4

Knowledge Skills: Small Unit Tactics 4

Languages: varies

Augmentations: Cybereyes [Rating 3, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, smartlink], wired reflexes 1

Gear: Full body armor [15] (w/ chemical protection 3, fire resistance 3, nonconductivity 3], full body armor helmet [3], medkit (Rating 6), quick-draw holster, survival kit

Weapons:

Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 8P, AP –5, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ APDS ammo, spare clips x2]

Mossberg AM-CMDT [Shotgun, Acc 5, DV 14P(f), AP +4, SA/BF/FA, RC 8, 10 (c), w/ flechette ammo, sling, spare clips x1]

Onotari Arms JP-K50 [Sniper Rifle, Acc 7, DV 12P, AP –3, SA/BF, RC 9, 25 (c), w/ regular ammo, bipod, spare clip x1]
Yamaha Raiden [Assault Rifle, Acc 8, DV 11P, AP –6, BF/FA, RC 9, 60 (c), w/ APDS ammo, sling, spare clips x2]
Blast shield [Exotic Melee, Acc 4, DV 20P, AP –4, SS, RC —]
Cougar Fineblade Knife [Blade, Acc 7, DV 7P, AP –1, Reach —]
Flash-bang (x2) [Grenade, DV 10S, 10M, AP –4]
Fragmentation (x2) [Grenade, DV 18P(f), –1/m, AP +5]

HEADHUNTER MEMBER

(MAGICIAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	4	6

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/11
Armor: 18
Limits: Physical 7, Mental 7, Social 8
Physical Initiative: 10 + 1D6
Skills: Armorer 2, Astral Combat 4, Close Combat skill group 3, Counterspelling 5, Demolitions 1, Exotic Melee Weapon (Blast Shield) 1, Firearms skill group 4, First Aid 3, Free Fall 3, Gunnery 2, Gymnastics 2, Heavy Weapons 1, Outdoors skill group 3, Perception 5, Pilot Aircraft 2, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pilot Watercraft 2, Spellcasting 6, Summoning 5, Thrown Weapons 2
Knowledge Skills: Small Unit Tactics 4
Languages: varies
Spells: Ball Lighting, Confusion, Destroy (Vehicle), Detect Enemies, Detect Life, Detect Magic, Detox, Glue, Glue Strip, Heal, Hot Potato, Improved Invisibility, Improved Reflexes, Lightning Bolt, Manaball, Manabolt, Mass Confusion, Mindnet, Stunball, Stunbolt
Gear: Foci (Force 3, Improved Reflexes), full body armor [15] (w/ chemical protection 3, fire resistance 3, nonconductivity 3], full body armor helmet [3], medkit (Rating 6), quick-draw holster, survival kit
Weapons:
Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 8P, AP –5, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ APDS ammo, spare clips x2]
Mossberg AM-CMDT [Shotgun, Acc 5, DV 14P(f), AP +4, SA/BF/FA, RC 8, 10 (c), w/ flechette ammo, sling, spare clips x1]
Cougar Fineblade [Blade, Acc 7, DV 7P, AP –1, Reach –]

JOSEPH MNGUNI

IZOLO INC.

Fighting is not Joseph's style, but he is willing to engage if the other party wants to lose. He will always have a group of elven security guards around him as well (Professional Rating 5), just to be on the safe side. Joseph is the sort of Johnson who will make an absurd

deal, then send a hit squad after the runners the moment they leave.

ELF

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
4	5	5 (8)	4	5	6	6	9	5	5.8	8

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 12
Limits: Physical 6(7), Mental 8, Social 11
Initiative: 11(14) + 4D6
Matrix Initiative: 14 + 3D6
Skills: Arcana 6, Automatics 4, Blades 4, Computer 7, Con 6, Cracking skill group 7, Etiquette (Business +2) 9, Instruction 4, Intimidation 8, Negotiation 9 (12), Perception 7, Performance 4, Pistols 4, Stealth skill group 6, Tracking 4
Qualities: Better to Be Feared than Loved, Exceptional Attribute: Charisma, First Impression, Too Pretty to Hit
Adept Powers: Authoritative Tone 1, Cool Resolve 1, Improved Ability (Negotiation) 3, Improved Reflexes 3, Kinesics 4, Mystic Armor 2, Spell Resistance 2, Voice Control 1
Initiate Grade: 10
Metamagics: Adept Centering, Centering, Extended Masking, Fae-Touched, Flexible Signature, Masking, Power Point x2, Presence: Intimidation, Sensing
Augmentations: Cosmetic alteration: neon blue facial hair, cybereye (single, gammaware, Rating 2, w/ eye protectors, flare compensation, image link, vision enhancement 3), datajack (gammaware)
Gear: Fairlight Paladin [w/ Baby Monitor, sim module (modified for hot sim), Smoke-and-Mirrors, Swerve, Track], lined coat (w/ AR gloves, fire resistance 3, nonconductivity 3, ultrasonic noise generator (4), Trompe L'oeil commlink,
Weapons:
Lemat 2072 (Revolver Barrel) [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5, DV 8P, AP –1, SS, 9(cy), w/ ammo skip system]
Lemat 2072 (Shotgun Barrel) [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5, DV 8P, AP –1, SS, 1 (b)]
Shiawase Arms Simoom [Exotic Ranged Weapon, Acc 5, DV 6P, AP —, SA/FA, 6 (ml)]
Ultimax 70 [Machine Pistol, Acc 6, DV 6P, AP —, BF/FA, RC 2, 15 (c), w/ gas-vent system (2), laser sight]
Ornate dagger [Blade, Acc 6, DV 5P, AP –3, w/ weapon focus (3)]

SPINRAD INDUSTRIES TROMPE L'OEIL LUXURY COMMLINK

Cost: 50,000¥
Availability: 16
Manufacturer: Spinrad Industries
Device Rating: 6
Basic Persona: Custom Designed per User
Base Theme: Red Carpet Event
Device Icon: Flashing Marquee

This is the commlink you buy when you have absolutely no concern for money and you desperately want to keep on the cutting edge of fashion. These commlinks are extraordinarily exclusive, and just having one is enough to convince the jet-set crowd that you are one of them. Good luck acquiring one, though. Spinrad Industries has a waiting list longer than Johnny Spinrad's ego, so if you aren't royalty or the CEO of a megacorp, you might be out of luck.

JOYGIRL-IX

INDEPENDENT AGENT (UNKNOWN FEMALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
4	5	5	3	5	5	5	6	5	4.005

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 9 or 11
Limits: Physical 5, Mental 6, Social 8
Physical Initiative: 10(12) + 1D6
Matrix Initiative: 11 + 2D6/3D6
Skills: Automatics 5, Blades 3, Clubs 4, Con 6, Computer 6, Cybercombat 6, Disguise 9, Electronic Warfare 4, Escape Artist 5, Etiquette 5, First Aid 2, Forgery 7, Hacking 6, Hardware 4, Impersonation 7, Intimidation 5, Gymnastics 6, Locksmith 4, Longarms 4, Navigation 5, Negotiation 6, Palming 5, Perception 6, Performance 7, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Pilot Watercraft 3, Sneaking 6, Software 4, Thrown Weapons 5, Unarmed Combat 5
Knowledge Skills: Investigations 5, Meditation 4, Method Acting 8, Music 4, Psychology 5, Religion 3, Stakeouts 6
Languages: Arabic 3, Aztlaner Spanish 4, Chinese 3, English N, French 4, German 5, Hebrew 3, Italian 5, Japanese 4
Qualities: Amnesia 1, Analytical Mind, Biocompatibility (cyberware), Blandness, Consummate Professional, Erased, Flashbacks, Incomplete Deprogramming, Paranoia, Phobia (uncommon, thaasophobia –fear of being bored), Photographic Memory, Profiler
Augmentations: Cybereyes (betaware) [Rating 2 w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, retinal duplication 1, smartlink, vision enhancement 1], data lock, datajack, dynamic handprints (betaware) 1, false face (betaware), internal air tank (alphaware), reaction enhancers 2, Shiawase Cyber-5 cranial cyberdeck (Device Rating 5, Atts 5587), smuggling compartment (left hip, alphaware)
Gear: Accelerator (5 doses), area jammer (Rating 3), AR Gloves, armor vest [9] (w/ auto-injector, concealable holster,

fire resistance 1, nonconductivity 3), backpack, ballistic mask (custom) [2] (w/ gas mask, micro-tranceiver, spatial recognizer, thermographic vision), binoculars (Rating 1 w/ vision enhancement 1, vision magnification: electronic), bug scanner (Rating 5), certified credsticks (ebony x1, gold x2, silver x2, standard x4, platinum x1), concealed quick-draw holster, datachip (x10), directional jammer (Rating 3), duffel bag, disposable syringe (x10), earbuds (Rating 2 w/ audio enhancement 2), electronic parts, fake SINs (Rating 6 "Helen Troy", Rating 6 "Isabella Andolini," Rating 4 "Karen Hays", Rating 4 "Inga Von Klaus"), kamikaze (2 doses), keycard copier, Jazz (4 doses), laser microphone (Rating 3 w/ audio enhancement 2, select sound filter 1,), lockpick set, low-light flashlight, glasses (Rating 1 w/ thermographic vision), Hermes Ikon commlink, Lined Coat [9] (w/ Auto-injector, drag handle, fire resistance 2, nonconductivity 2), long haul (6 doses), MD-9 autoinjection gun, maglock passkey (Rating 5), medkit (Rating 3), medkit (Rating 6, plastic restraints (x10), programs (armor, baby monitor, biofeedback, decryption, exploit, sneak, stealth), satellite link, security tags (x10), sensor tags (x10), sequencer (Rating 4), slab (3 doses), stealth tags (x10), spare heavy pistol ammo (x60 gel rounds, x60 regular rounds), spare SMG ammo (x60 APDS rounds, x60 regular rounds), spare shotgun ammo (x20 APDS rounds, x20 flechette, x20 regular, x20 stick-n-shock), subvocal microphone, tag eraser, telescoping mirror on a stick, toolkit (disguise), toolkit (hardware), toolkit (locksmith), Transys Arthur commlink (stun dongle attached), trauma patches (x3), traveler lifestyle (6 months), white noise generator

Weapons:

Ares Crusader II [Machine Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 7P, AP —, SA/BF, RC 4, 40 (c), w/ regular ammo, spare clips x2]

Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 8S, AP —, SA, RC —, 15 (c), w/ gel rounds, spare clips x2]

HK Urban Combat [SMG, Acc 7 (9), DV 8P, AP –4, SA/BF/FA, RC 4, 15 (c), w/ APDS ammo, 2 spare clips, suppressor/silencer sling]

Remington 990 [Shotgun, Acc 4 (6), DV 11P, AP –5, SA, RC 2, 5 (c), w/ APDS ammo, external smartlink, low-light flashlight, folding stock, modular attachment, sling]

Shiwase Arms Puzzler [Light Pistol, Acc 4, DV 6S, AP —, SA, RC —, 12 (c), w/ gel rounds]

Extendable baton [Club, Acc 5, DV 5P, Reach 1]

Stun dongle [Club, Acc 4, DV 9S(e), Reach 1]

Victorinox Memory Blade (knife) [Blade, Acc 5, DV 4P, Reach —]

KAZE ADEKI

LEADER TRU-13 (HUMAN MALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
6 (7)	5	5 (7)	6 (7)	5	3	4	4	3	6.0	6

Condition Monitor (P/S): 12/11

Armor: 8/16*

Limits: Physical 8(10), Mental 5, Social 7

Physical Initiative: 9(11) + 3D6

Skills: Arcana 6, Assensing 5, Astral Combat 8, Computer 3, Firearms skill group 4, Gymnastics 4, Influence skill group 7, Intimidation 7, Leadership 8, Perception 6, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pilot Watercraft 2, Running 2, Sneaking 3, Unarmed Combat 9

Knowledge Skills: Anatomy 3, Corporate History (MCT) 5, Intelligence Operations 5, Investigation 5, Magical Theory 4, Meditation 5, Psychology 4, Security Procedures 6, Small Unit Tactics 4, Sumo Wrestling 7

Languages: Chinese 3, English 3, German 3, Japanese N

Qualities: Athlete's Way, Better to Be Feared than Loved, College Education, Consummate Professional, Guts, High Pain Tolerance 2, Prejudice 2 (outspoken, metahumans), SINner (Corporate Limited)

Initiate Grade: 2

Metamagics: Adept Centering, Power Point

Adept Powers: Astral Perception, Combat Sense 2, Critical Strike (Unarmed Combat), Improved Ability 1 (Unarmed Combat), Improved Physical Attribute 1 (Body), Improved Physical Attribute 1 (Strength), Improved Reflexes 2, Inertia Strike, Killing Hands, Mystic Armor 2, Penetrating Strike 1, Rooting, Spirit Ram

Gear: AR gloves, Actioneer business clothes [8], armor jacket* [12] (w/ nonconductivity 5, quick-draw holster, shock weave], certified credstick (ebony), fake SIN (Rating 6, "Donald Yama"), flashlight (low-light), forearm guards* [1], gas mask (Rating 3), glasses [Rating 4, w/ flare compensation, low-light vision, image link, smartlink], high lifestyle (12 months), mage sight goggles, micro-tranceiver, Novatech NetNinja commlink, 10 plastic restraints, Securetech PPP legs kit* [1], subvocal microphone, tag eraser

Maneuvers: Wrestling: Sumo Style (Barbed Hooks, Clinch, Herding, Jiao Di: Knockdown, Neijia, Rooted Tree, Throw Person)

Weapons:

Ares Predator V [Heavy Pistol, Acc 7, DV 9P, AP –2, SA, RC 3, 15 (c), w/ 45 rounds EX-explosive ammo, spare clips x2]

SCK Model 100 [SMG, Acc 5, DV 9P, AP –1, SA/BF, RC 5, 30 (c)] w/ 60 rounds EX-explosive ammo, sling, spare clips x3]

KOKUO ZHIGULI

(ZHIGUL MAKERS, DWARF ADEPT)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
8 (10)	6 (8)	5 (8)	7 (10)	6	5	6	6	6	6.0	12

Condition Monitor (P/S): 13/11
Armor: 15
Limits: Physical 9(13), Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative: 11(14) + 4D6
Skills: Arcana 6, Armorer 6, Artisan 6, Athletics skill group 6, Blades 9 (14), Demolitions 8, Etiquette 9 (Dwarfs +2), Firearms skill group 5, Industrial Mechanic 4, Instruction 6, Intimidation 6, Leadership 9 (Dwarfs +2), Navigation 5, Negotiation 9 (Dwarfs +2), Perception 7, Pilot Ground Craft 4, Survival 4, Tracking 4
Qualities: Practice, Practice, Practice (Leadership), Toughness
Adept Powers: Improved Ability (Blades) (5), Improved Physical Attribute (Agility) (2), Improved Physical Attribute (Body) (2), Improved Physical Attribute (Strength) (3), Improved Reflexes (3), Mystic Armor (6)
Initiate Grade: 6
Metamagic: Flexible Signature, Masking, Power Point x4
Gear: Armor vest, MCT Blue Defender
Weapons:
Lemat 2072 (Revolver Barrel) [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5, DV 8P, AP –1, SS, 9 (cy), w/ ammo skip system]
Lemat 2072 (Shotgun Barrel) [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5, DV 8P, AP –1, SS, 1 (b)]
Sword weapon focus (4) [Blade, Reach 1, Acc 6, DV 13P, AP –2, w/ weapon focus (4)]

KYLE BLACKLIGHTER

MATRIX PERSONALITY (DWARF MALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
4	3	2	3	4	4	4	6	2	5.5

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/10
Armor: 9
Limits: Physical 4, Mental 6, Social 8
Physical Initiative: 6 + 1D6
Skills: Arcana 3, Computer 6, Con 3, Etiquette 7, Hardware 4, Impersonation 3, Instruction 4, Negotiation 4, Palming 3, Perception 6, Performance 7, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Pistols 2, Software 4, Sneaking 3, Swimming 1, Unarmed Combat 1
Knowledge Skills: Aetherology 2, Biology 2, Conspiracy Theories 8, Criminal Organizations 5, Current Events 7, Geography: Los Angeles 5, Geography: San Francisco 4, Ghost Towns 4, History 5, HMHVV 3, Matrix-cast Shows 6, Matrix Phenomena 3, Mythology 6, Neo-Anarchist Groups 6, Paranormal Investigations 4, Paranormal Studies 3, Religions 4, Secret Societies 2, Sixth World Threats 4, Talk Shows 7, Underground Organizations 4, Ultraviolent History (dragons) 3, Urban Legends 6
Languages: Chinese 2, English N, Japanese N, Or'zet 3
Qualities: Big Regret, Data Liberator, Distinctive Style (voice), Linguist, Online Fame, Photographic Memory, SINner (Cal Free State), Speed Reading
Augmentations: Cyberears [Rating 2 w/ audio analyzer, audio enhancement 2, dampener, increased hearing spectrum, select sound filter 2, sound link], datajack, data lock
Vehicles:
C-N Jackrabbit [Handling 4/3, Speed 3, Accel 2, Body 8, Armor 4, Pilot 1, Sensors 2, Seats 2]
Gear: Area jammer (Rating 3), AR gloves, armor vest [9], concealable holster, datachip (x10), DocWagon contract (gold), electronic paper, Erika Elite commlink, monocle (Rating 3 w/ image link, vision enhancement 1, vision magnification: electric), middle lifestyle (3 months), spare light pistol ammo (x100 gel rounds), white noise generator
Weapons:
Ares Light Fire 70 [Light Pistol, Acc 7, DV 6S, AP +1, SA, RC —, 16 (c), w/ gel rounds]

LADY XOC

FIRST AMONG SISTERS, HIGH PRIESTESS FACTION

Lady Xoc appears to be human, but as with all things in the Seelie Court, things are not always what they appear. Lady Xoc will avoid combat if at all possible, preferring negotiation and illusion/manipulation spells. She will fight, though, before she allows herself to come to harm.

LADY XOC (SHAMAN)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
5	6	6	4	6	6	6	6	6	6.0	18

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/11
Armor: 0/12 (Lady Xoc constantly sustains an Armor spell with a sustaining focus. Treat as if she had 12 successes)
Limits: Physical 7, Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative: 12 + 1D6 / 18 + 4D6 (Lady Xoc constantly sustains an Increase Reflexes spell with a sustaining focus. Treat as if she had 6 successes)
Qualities: First Impression, Spirit Champion, Spirit Whisperer, Trustworthy, Mentor Spirit: Goddess
Skills: Arcana 12, Assensing 12, Conjuring Group 12, Counterspelling 10, Etiquette (Awakened +2) 9, Leadership 9, Negotiation 9, Perception 6, Performance 9, Ritual Spellcasting 12, Spellcasting 9

Spells: Assume Lady Xoc has access to whichever spells she needs.
Initiate Grade: 12
Metamagics: Channeling, Cleansing, Efficient Ritual, Extended Masking, Flexible Signature, Greater Ritual, Masking, Psychometry, Reflection, Sensing, Shielding, Sympathetic Linking
Gear: Sustaining Focus: Health Spells (6), Sustaining Focus: Manipulation Spells (12)
Weapons: None

NEW MENTOR SPIRIT

GODDESS

The Goddess has taken many forms in many different cultures. This is not simply a goddess; those who follow the Goddess totem recognize the inherent power of the divine feminine. Whether known by particular names such as Diana, Cybele, Ashera, Awilix, Isis, Ishtar, Freya, the Moon, Hera, or even the Madonna, the Goddess lifts up the sacredness of women. Some see the Goddess as providing an equally strong balance to divine males, while others follow the Goddess because they see her as stronger than any male counterparts. Whichever is true, the Goddess is the mediator of sacred knowledge and greater universal mysteries. Goddess reveals the hidden wisdom and strength in her followers.

ADVANTAGES

All: +2 dice pool modifier for Instruction Tests.
Magician: +2 dice pool modifier for Ritual Spellcasting Tests.
Adept: 1 free level of Authoritative Tone.

DISADVANTAGES

The Goddess refuses to take a backseat to any male counterparts. Unless you succeed in a Charisma + Willpower Test (3), you will not take orders from a male, or if a male disrespects you, you must respond with equal measure.

Similar Archetypes: Moon

LA PANTERA

VENGEANCE IN TENOCHTITLÁN

HUMAN RAZORGIRL

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
6	6 (9)	5 (8)	5 (9)	5	4	6	4	5	2.0

Condition Monitor (P/S): 11/11
Armor: 18
Limits: Physical 7(11), Mental 7, Social 5
Initiative: 11(14) + 4D6
Skills: Athletics skill group 5, Automotive Mechanic 2, Blades 8, Intimidation 3, Navigation 3, Perception 7, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Pistols 3, Sneaking 4, Survival 4, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3
Qualities: Code of Honor: Avenging Angel, Redliner
Augmentations: Cyberleg [obvious, deltaware w/ cyberlimb agility (4), cyberlimb strength (4)], cyberleg [obvious, deltaware, w/ cyberlimb agility (4), cyberlimb strength (4)], muscle augmentation 3 (deltaware), muscle toner 2 (deltaware), wired reflexes 3 (deltaware)
Gear: Full body armor (w/ chemical seal), full body armor helmet (w/ flare compensation, gas mask, image link, vision enhancement 2), Renraku Sensei
Weapons:
Streetline Special [Hold-out, Acc 4, DV 6P, AP —, SA, 6(c)]
Katana [Blade, Reach 1, Acc 7, DV 12P, AP –3]
Vehicles:
Yamaha Kaburaya [Handling 5/3, Speed 6, Accel 3, Body 5, Armor 4, Pilot 1, Sensor 2, Seats 1]

LILITH

Lilith was one of the lucky few Otaku who survived Crash 2.0—not only alive, but better. After her technomancer abilities manifested, she was caught up in a dissonance cult that was taken down recently by a number of high-profile shadowrunners. Lilith believes that she has a unique relationship with the Dissonance, which she refers to with oddly romantic language, and she has taken it upon herself to be something of an evangelist for it. She claims to be able to awaken technomancer abilities in otherwise mundane metahumans, but these claims are unverified, as those who have taken her up on her offer have never been heard from again.

LILITH

(MATROTA ODAM, ELF FREELANCE MATRIX SECURITY CONSULTANT, DISSONANT TECHNOMANCER)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	R
2	4	5	2	4	7	5	6	5	5.9	7

Condition Monitor (P/S): 9/10
Armor: 6
Limits: Physical 4, Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative: 10 + 1D6
Matrix Initiative: 12 + 5D6
Skills: Blades 3, Compiling 5, Computer 6, Con 5, Cybercombat 7, Decompiling 5, Electronic Warfare 7, Hacking 6, Hardware 4, Leadership 3, Negotiation 4, Perception 4, Pistols 2, Registering 6, Software 3
Qualities: Exceptional Attribute: Logic, Otaku to Techomancer
Augmentation: Datajack
Complex Forms: Diffusion of Data Processing, Diffusion of Sleaze, Infusion of Attack, Infusion of Firewall, Pulse Storm, Resonance Spike, Static Bomb
Submersion Grade: 3
Echoes: Attack Upgrade, Contaminate, Overclocking
Gear: Armor clothing, Erika Elite commlink
Weapons:
Fichetti Tiffani Self-Defender 2075 [Hold-out, Acc 4, DV 6P, AP —, SS, 4 (c)]
Vibro knife [Blade, Acc 5, DV 4P, AP –2, w/ vibro blade battery]

LORD GWYN

EOLAÍ OF THE UNSEELIE COURT

Lord Gwyn remains a mysterious figure. He appears human, but he has been around for a very, very long time. When/if players encounter Gwyn, use him less as an enemy for the PCs, more like a plot device. Lord Gwyn is capable of fighting off the most vigorous attack and wiping the floor with the party, but he is also dying from unknown causes. Use this as a way to bring Gwyn down a peg if it makes the story better—or have him whale on the PCs and capture them for the same reason. Gwyn's stats are an approximation and do not reflect the full extent of his abilities. If anyone studies Gwyn's use of magic, they might see that his tradition superficially resembles the Path of the Wheel, perhaps sharing a common ancestor tradition.

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
6 (10)	6 (10)	6 (10)	6 (10)	6	6	6	6	7	6.0	31

Condition Monitor (P/S): 17/15
Armor: 22
Limits: Physical 8(13), Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative: 12(15) + 4D6
Skills: Arcana 12, Assensing 12, Conjuring skill group 12, Counterspelling 10, Etiquette 9 (Awakened +2), Leadership 9, Negotiation 9, Perception 6, Performance 9, Ritual Spellcasting 12, Spellcasting 9
Spells: Assume Gwyn has access to whichever spell he needs
Initiate Grade: 25+
Adept Powers: Cloak (4), Combat Sense (2), Cool Resolve (1), Counterstrike (1), Improved Physical Attribute (Agility) (4), Improved Physical Attribute (Body) (4), Improved Physical Attribute (Strength) (4), Improved Reflexes (3), Indomitable Will (6), Master Archer, Mystic Armor (8), Pain Resistance (2), Riposte (4), Spell Resistance (4), Supernatural Toughness (4)
Metamagics: Absorption, Adept Centering, Anchoring, Astral Bluff, Centering, Cleansing, Extended Masking, Flexible Signature, Greater Ritual, Masking, Penetrating Spell, Quickening, Reflection, Sensing, Shielding, Spell Shaping, Stillness of the Void, Supernatural Prowess (Strength)
Gear: Ancient bronze armor
Weapons:
Barbed spear [Blade, Reach 3, Acc 5, DV 13P, AP –2]
Dark crimson throwing shield [Exotic Melee Weapon, Acc 4, DV 12S, AP —]
Bow (10) [Bow, Acc 6, DV 12P, AP –3]

MARA ARIEL

(FREELANCE OPERATIVE, FEMALE ELF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
6 (9)	7 (10)	6 (10)	4	5	5	6	7	6	6.0	10

Condition Monitor (P/S): 13/11
Armor: 12
Limits: Physical 7(9), Mental 8, Social 9
Initiative: 12(16) + 4D6
Qualities: Guts, Indomitable (Mental) 1, Mentor Spirit: Lion
Skills: Athletics skill group 7, Close Combat skill group 8 (Blades +2), Demolitions 7, Firearms skill group 7, Perception 7, Stealth skill group 6
Initiate Grade: 4
Adept Powers: Attribute Boost (Strength) (6), Improved Ability (Blades) (2), Improved Physical Attribute (Reaction) (1), Improved Physical Attribute (Agility) (3), Improved Reflexes (3), Mystic Armor (2)
Metamagics: Adept Centering, Flexible Signature, Masking, Power Point
Gear: Armor vest, Shiawase Arms Simoom, qi focus (Improved Physical Attribute [Body] 3), fake SIN (Rating 6), Hermes Ikon
Weapons:
Shiawase Arms Simoom [Exotic Ranged Weapon, Acc 5, DV 6P, AP —, SA/FA, 6 (ml)],
Uzi IV [SMG, Acc 5, DV 7P, AP —, BF, RC (1), 24 (c)] w/ Folding Stock, Laser Sight,
Sword weapon focus (5) [Blade, Reach 1, Acc 6, DV 9P, AP –2, w/ weapon focus (5)]
Smoke grenade x2 [Grenade, non-aerodynamic, Acc 11, DV Smoke, 10m R, AP —]
Thermal smoke grenade [Grenade, non-aerodynamic, Acc 11, DV Th. Smoke, 10m R, AP —]

NEW MENTOR SPIRIT

LION

Lion is a strong and proud warrior with no use for subtlety or cowardice. Lion has the discipline to hold back its immense power until the right moment, so they do not mind setting an ambush or using stealth. When it is time to fight, however, a Lion gives its all and holds nothing back. A Lion's pride is everything to them. Hunting, fighting, killing is all secondary to the needs of its pride, which is the true source of its strength.

ADVANTAGES

All: +2 dice pool modifier for Survival Tests, Running Tests, or Tracking Tests (Choose One)

Magician: +2 dice to Combat spells, preparations, and rituals

Adept: 2 free levels of Attribute Boost (Strength)

DISADVANTAGES

The Lion's greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. You surround yourself with other, like-minded individuals and bond together to form long-lasting, almost familial ties. As a result, you will do anything to protect your friends and family. In combat situations, a Lion will never leave a comrade behind, and will fight to the death to protect an ally. Unless you succeed in a Charisma + Willpower Test (3), you cannot flee combat before your team members are safe. Further, whenever taking actions that don't benefit the team somehow, your physical and mental limits are reduced by 2.

Similar Archetypes: Tiger, Strength

ORENJI AND TURGAN

Orenji and Turgan are high-end antiquities dealers. They come as a package, although Turgan does most of the heavy lifting. Orenji is as slimy and treacherous as they come, although he makes every attempt to ingratiate himself to his business partners. Since rumors about the Sixth World Tarot have picked up steam, Orenji and Turgan have been hired to track down any and all cards they can find. Who hired them is a mystery, but the employers must want the cards badly, because these two don't come cheap.

ORENJI

(DWARF)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
3	3	5	3	5	6	6	6	5	6.0

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 14
Limits: Physical 5, Mental 8, Social 8
Initiative: 11 + 1D6
Qualities: Out For Myself
Skills: Clubs 3, Con 3, Demolitions 3, Disguise 3, Escape Artist 3, Forgery 3, Influence skill group 4, Locksmith 3, Longarms 5, Perception 5, Pilot Ground Craft 2, Sneaking 3
Gear: Armor jacket (w/ chemical protection 3, drag handle, fire resistance 3, nonconductivity 5), cram (2 doses), helmet (spatial recognizer, audio enhancement 1, biomonitor), autopicker (rating 4), glasses (capacity 4, w/ vision enhancement 3, flare compensation), 2 x fake SINs (rating 6), MCT Blue Defender (Device Rating 3), jammer (area, Rating 6)
Weapons:
Krime Boss [Shotgun, Acc 3, DV 13P, AP –1, SA, RC 1, 15 (d)]
Baton [Club, Reach 1, Acc 4, DV 6P, AP —]

TURGAN (ORK)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
9	5	6 (9)	7 (11)	3	2	2	2	3	4.2

Condition Monitor (P/S): 13/10
Armor: 13
Limits: Physical 10(14), Mental 3, Social 4
Initiative: 8(11) + 4D6
Qualities: Computer Illiterate, Tough as Nails (Physical) (3), Toughness
Skills: Clubs 8, Gymnastics 5, Running 5, Unarmed Combat 7
Augmentations: Muscle augmentation 4 (deltaware) , orthoskin 4 (deltaware), spurs (deltaware), synaptic booster 3 (deltaware)
Gear: Armor vest, fake SIN (Rating 6), MCT Blue Defender (Device Rating 3)
Weapons:
Club [Club, Reach 1, Acc 4, DV 13P, AP —/–4]
Spurs (deltaware) [Unarmed, Acc 14, DV 14P, AP –2]

TASK FORCE 154

RICK SORENSON

FBI SPECIAL AGENT (HUMAN MALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
5	4/5	4/6	5/6	4	4	5	4	5	4.5

Condition Monitor (P/S): 12/10
Armor: 11 or 18
Limits: Physical 7, Mental 6, Social 6
Physical Initiative: 9/11 + 1D6

Skills: Armorer 3, Automatics 5, Automotive Mechanic 3, Blades 4, Clubs 6, Computer 3, Demolitions 1, Etiquette 2, First Aid 4, Gunnery 2, Gymnastics 4, Heavy Weapons 3, Instruction 3, Intimidation 5, Leadership 3, Longarms 5, Navigation 3, Negotiation 2, Palming 2, Perception 3, Pilot Aircraft 1, Pilot Ground Craft 5, Pilot Watercraft 3, Pistols 7, Running 5, Survival 2, Swimming 3, Thrown Weapons 4, Tracking 4, Thrown Weapons 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Knowledge Skills: Conservative Studies 6, Dietary Sciences 3, FBI Policy and Procedures 5, Firearms Publications 5, Forensics 2, Investigations 2, History: United States 5, History: UCAS 5, Neo-Anarchist Movements 2, Sports Medicine 2, Stakeouts 3, Terrorist Organizations 5, UCAS Politics 4

Languages: English N

Qualities: Adrenaline Surge, College Education, Combat Junkie, Dependents (ex-wife) 1, Distinctive Style (All-American G-Man), My Country Right or Wrong, Tough as Nails (Physical) 1

Augmentations: Bone Lacing (plastic), cybereyes [Rating 2, w/ image link, low-light vision, smartlink, thermographic vision], dermal plating 1, muscle augmentation 1, muscle toner 1, reaction enhancers 2

Gear: Armored vest [9] (w/ concealed holster, fire resistance 2, nonconductivity 3), binoculars (Rating 2 w/ image link, vision enhancement 1, vision magnification: electronic), Doc Wagon contract (gold), Erika Elite commlink, certified credstick (silver), concealed quick-draw holster, containment manacles, directional microphone (Rating 2), earbuds (Rating 2 w/ spatial recognizer), glasses (Rating 1 w/ flare compensation), magecuffs, medkit (Rating 3), micro-camera, middle lifestyle (2 months), plasteel restraints, plastic restraints (x10), radioactive tracking dye, subvocal microphone, spare heavy pistol ammo (x100 regular rounds), spare shotgun ammo (x100 APDS rounds, x100 regular rounds, x50 stick-n-shock rounds), SWAT armor [15] (w/ chemical protection 4, drag handle, fire resistance 4, insulation 2, nonconductivity 4), SWAT armor helmet [3] (w/ gas mask, micro-tranceiver), trauma patch (x2)

Maneuvers: Boxing Classic Style (Full Offense, Haymaker, Oaken Stance: Defense Against Being Knocked Down), Firefight (Close Quarter Defense Against Firearms, Close Quarter Firearms: Pistols)

Weapons:

Colt Agent Special [Light Pistol, Acc 5 (7), DV 8P, AP —, SA, RC –, 8 (c), w/ regular ammo, external smartgun system, spare clips 2]

Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, Acc 6 (8), DV 7P, AP –1, SA, RC —, 14 (c), w/ regular ammo, external smartgun system, spare clips 3]

Franchi SPAS-24 [Shotgun, Acc 4 (6), DV 12P, AP –5, SA/BF, RC 5, 10 (c), w/ APDS ammo, low-light flashlight, side mount, sling, shock pad]

Flash Bang Grenade (x2) [Grenade, 10S, 10m R, -4]

Smoke Grenade (x2) [Grenade, Smoke, 10m R]

Extendable Baton [Club, Acc 5, DV 5P, Reach 1]

Knife [Blade, Acc 5, DV 7P, Reach 1]

AMBER WHITEHOUSE

FBI AGENT/RESEARCHER (HUMAN FEMALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS	M
3	3	4	2	6	4	5	4	4	6	3

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11

Armor: 9

Limits: Physical 4, Mental 7, Social 7

Physical Initiative: 9 + 1D6

Astral Initiative: 10 + 2D6

Skills: Alchemy 6, Artificing 6, Arcana 5, Assensing 5, Automatics 1, Clubs 2, Computers 6, Con 3, Counterspelling 3, Disenchanting 5, Etiquette 5, First Aid 2, Gymnastics 2, Instruction 3, Longarms 1, Negotiation 5, Palming 4, Perception 6, Pilot Ground Craft 3, Pistols 4, Running 1, Software 3, Sneaking 6, Spellcasting 4, Summoning 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Knowledge Skills: Boy Bands 5, Classic Literature 3, Cooking 5, FBI Bureaucracy 6, FBI Policies and Procedures 4, Investigation 2, Magical Artifacts 2, Magical Forensics 4, Magical Phenomenon 7, Magical Societies 4, Magical Theory 6, Occult Groups 5, Pop Culture 5, Romantic Sims 7, Talislegging 3, Urban Legends 3

Languages: Chinese 2, English N, Gaelic 4, German 2, Japanese 3, Or'Zet 2, Sign Language 3

Qualities: Analytical Mind, City Slicker, College Education, Combat Paralysis, Common Sense, Low Pain Tolerance, Photographic Memory, SINner (UCAS)

Spells: Analyze Magic, Analyze Truth, Borrow Sense, Death Replay, Detect Life, Detect Magic, Double Image, Flamethrower, Heal, Stunbolt, Translate

Gear: AR gloves, armor vest [9] (w/ chemical protection 3, fire resistance 3, nonconductivity 3), astral powder, DocWagon contract (gold), Erika Elite commlink, certified credstick (silver), concealed quick-draw holster, containment manacles, datachips (x10), earbuds (Rating 2 w/ spatial recognizer), fetish (x3), glasses (Rating 3 w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision), long haul (4 doses), magical lodge materials, magic tool cleansers (x15), medkit (Rating 3), mana sensitive film plate (x5), micro-camera, middle lifestyle (4 months), plasteel restraints, plastic restraints (x10), reagents (raw, 4 drams), reagents (refined, 2 drams), subvocal microphone, trauma patch (x2)

Weapons:

Defiance EX Shocker [Taser, Acc 4 (5), DV 9S(e), AP –5,

SS, RC —, 4 (m), w/ 4 spare darts, laser sight]
Colt Government 2066 [Heavy Pistol, Acc 6 (7), DV 7P, AP –1, SA, RC —, 14 (c), w/ regular ammo, laser sight, spare clips x3]
Extendable Baton [Club, Acc 5, DV 4P, Reach 1]

IAN DECKER

INTERPOL SPECIAL AGENT, FBI LIAISON (HUMAN MALE)

B	A	R	S	W	L	I	C	EDG	ESS
4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	6	6.0

Condition Monitor (P/S): 10/11
Armor: 10
Limits: Physical 6, Mental 7, Social 7
Physical Initiative: 9 + 1D6
Skills: Armorer 2, Automatics 5, Automotive Mechanic 4, Chemistry 3, Clubs 5, Computer 5, Con 6, Disguise 4, Escape Artist 3, First Aid 4, Forgery 3, Gymnastics 3, Impersonation 6, Instruction 4, Intimidation 6, Leadership 5, Longarms 4, Navigation 3, Nautical Mechanic 3, Negotiation 4, Palming 5, Perception 7, Pilot Ground Craft 6, Pilot Watercraft 4, Pistols 6, Running 4, Survival 2, Sneaking 5, Swimming 3, Tracking 6, Thrown Weapons 3, Unarmed Combat 5
Knowledge Skills: Chess 6, Classic Cars 6, Criminal Law 6, Criminal Organizations 5, Criminology 6, European Smuggling Routes 4, Forensics 4, International Criminal Law 5, Investigation 7, Psychology 5, Sociology 4, Spirits/Cocktails 3, Whiskies 5
Languages: Czech 2, English N, French 3, German 4, Greek 2, Japanese 2, Italian 3, Polish 2, Spanish 3, Sperethiel 1, Swedish 2
Qualities: Analytical Mind, Big Regret, Loss of Confidence (Leadership), Perceptive 2, Perceptive Defender, Prejudiced (specific/biased: criminals), Profiler, SINner (United Kingdom), Quick Healer
Maneuvers: Akido (Counterstrike, Strike the Darkness, Throw Person), Krav Maga (Called Shot: Disarm, Releasing Talons, Yielding Force)
Gear: Binoculars (Rating 2 w/ image link, vision enhancement 1, vision magnification: electronic), Doc Wagon contract (gold), certified credstick (silver), concealed quick-draw holster, containment manacles, directional microphone (Rating 2), earbuds (Rating 2 w/ spatial recognizer), glasses (Rating 4 w/ flare compensation, image link, low-light vision, smartlink), Hermes Ikon commlink, magecuffs, medkit (Rating 3), micro-camera, middle lifestyle (8 months), plasteel restraints, plastic restraints (x10), radioactive tracking dye, security tags (x10), stealth tags (x10), subvocal microphone, spare shotgun ammo (x 90 APDS, x100 flechette, x100 regular, x50 stealth tag tracker, x50 stick-in-shock), spare heavy pistol ammo (x70 APDS, x70 gel rounds, x70 regular, x70 stealth tracker), spare hold out pistol ammo (x10 APDS, x10 regular), tag eraser, tool kit (Forensics), trauma patch (x2), trodes, Ulysses Coat [10] (w/ concealable holster, fire resistance 1, insulation 2, nonconductivity 2, shock weave)
Weapons:
Cavalier Deputy [Heavy Pistol, Acc 5 (9), DV 7P, AP –5, SA, RC 2, 7 (cy), w/ APDS ammo, external smartgun system, personalized grip, speed loaders (x3)]
Enfield AS-7 [Shotgun, Acc 4 (6), DV 13P, AP –5, SA/BF, RC 3, 10 (c), w/ APDS ammo, external smartgun system, sling, spare clips x2, underbarrel weight]
Walther Palm Pistol [Hold Out, Acc 4, DV 7P, AP –4, SS/BF-2, RC 2, 2 (b), w/ APDS ammo]
Extendable Baton [Club, Acc 5, DV 5P, Reach 1]
Knife [Blade, Acc 5, DV 5P, Reach 1]

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SIXTH WORLD
TAROT
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FIN

NO LONGER HIDDEN

The Bastard, upright. A man in clown makeup stands in a broken skyraker window over another man on the verge of a long plummet. Near the clown's hand, a white rose. Opportunity, adventure, but also mania and frenzy. 404, upright. A woman crouches on the edge of a rooftop, holding a white rose. In the distance is the image of a woman in a red dress. Destruction, failure, collapse. Queen of coins. A woman in a red dress, lounging amidst luxury. She has material wealth but emptiness of soul. Upright, she is opulence, magnificent. Inverse is suspense, fear.

Opportunity and adventure abounds. Destruction and failure loom. Will the result be magnificence—or fear?

Book of the Lost takes the intricate art of the Sixth World Tarot and turns it into stories and campaigns for *Shadowrun* players. Full of plot hooks and adventure seeds, this book is a treasure trove of ideas, mysteries, and enigmas that can make memorable games. Open it and explore knowledge that had been lost but is now, here, rediscovered. And waiting for you.

Book of the Lost is for use with *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition*, and can easily be used with *Shadowrun: Anarchy* with minor NPC adjustments.

SHADOWRUN
FIFTH EDITION

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